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Marxism Today

GEORGE MATTHEWS — NIGHTMARE STRATEGY OF "LIMITED WAR"

LIONEL MUNBY — MARXISM AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT, 1880-1900

MAURICE DOBB — CHANGES IN CAPITALISM SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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JOHN BRIGHT and JOE RADLEY — ON MARXIST THEORY OF CRISIS

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Marxism Today

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The Nightmare Strategy of "Limited War"

George Matthews

I. Western Policy and N.A.T.O.

THE N.A.T.O. Council meeting in mid-December is the next step in the attempt to adjust the military and political strategy of the West to a situation which ten years ago its rulers did not foresee.

It has been preceded by a meeting of N.A.T.O. Parliamentarians in which the most bellicose American statements were combined with various efforts to rescue Western policy from the impasse in which it has landed.

The Western strategy pursued up to date has proved bankrupt primarily because it completely under-estimated the Soviet Union, the development of the national liberation movement, and the strength of the peace movement.

Western policy was originally conceived on the assumption of military superiority over the Soviet Union, and the expectation that it would be possible to maintain that superiority.

Thus in 1947 the well-known American commentator, Hanson Baldwin, estimated that the Soviet Union would produce one atomic bomb some time between 1950 and 1957, that it would then take it another twenty years to build up a significant stockpile, and that in any case the Soviet Union was not likely to develop a delivery system for a long time. (*New York Times*, November 9th, 1947.)

Western Monopoly Ended

In fact the Soviet Union broke the American atomic bomb monopoly by 1949. In 1953 it had the hydrogen bomb. By 1955 the West had to recognise that the Soviet Union was producing long-range bombers superior to anything existing in the West. And finally this year, the Soviet Union announced its possession of the inter-continental ballistic missile (I.C.B.M.) well in advance of the United States, and proved its capabilities to the whole world by sending up the earth satellites.

The result is that the previous Western policies, embodied in the slogans of "containment", "negotiation from strength", "the great deterrent", and "massive retaliation", have been completely outdated by events.

Even before the Soviet announcement regarding the I.C.B.M., "massive retaliation" no longer made sense as the sole and exclusive Western strategical doctrine, and was being increasingly criticised in official and semi-official circles.

Nevertheless, the first reaction of American and British imperialism to the Soviet announcement was that it was now desperately urgent for the West to catch up with the Russians in the ballistic missile field.

Hence there was talk of "pooling" atomic secrets and research; of ending U.S. inter-service rivalries; of embarking on a "crash programme" with a "tsar" in charge; and of preparing to spend far more money on arms.

But even if all these plans succeeded in their aim, and the United States did develop the I.C.B.M., it would still not rehabilitate the "massive retaliation" doctrine.

It was one thing to talk only of "massive retaliation" when it was expected that the United States would be able to bomb the Soviet Union from its forward bases, but remain more or less immune itself.

It is quite another thing now that the Soviet Union has the I.C.B.M., in addition to a powerful long-range air force.

Thus for some time now efforts have been made in the West to work out a supplementary policy to that of "massive retaliation". The object is not to replace the old doctrine, but to add to it.

Selective Nuclear War

What the Western military experts and statesmen are aiming at is a policy which would enable nuclear weapons to be used against the liberation movements and to maintain and, if possible, strengthen the position of imperialism, *without* resulting in nuclear attacks on the United States and what is termed "all-out" war.

Undoubtedly the aim of the United States in pressing for the forthcoming N.A.T.O. Council meeting is to carry this process forward.

First, a dramatic quality is to be given to the meeting by the presence of the U.S. President and the British Prime Minister. This is intended to reassure those in Western Europe who are

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worried by the revelation of Soviet strength and fear the consequences to them of a thermo-nuclear war.

Second, there will be an attempt to speed up the arms drive. Already in the United States 400 million dollars has been added to the arms bill. The programme of increased nuclear production and the supply of more nuclear weapons to Western Europe will involve still greater expenditure, both by the American and European Governments.

Third, the question of bringing Western strategy up to date will be discussed.

It would be wrong, of course, to imagine that there is a state of happy unanimity amongst the N.A.T.O. powers. The inter-imperialist contradictions remain, whatever papering-over of the cracks may take place at particular moments.

The Anglo-American differences remain: the U.S. rejected the Tory plan for an exclusive Anglo-American agreement and instead proposed the N.A.T.O. meeting. The French outcry over Tunisia; concern about supplying West Germany with atomic weapons; growing opposition to N.A.T.O. nuclear strategy—these all contribute to the divisions within N.A.T.O.

From the point of view of the British people, Macmillan's policy of "inter-dependence" in fact means a greater loss of national sovereignty and further dependence on the United States. In his speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet on November 9th, Macmillan quite openly declared that Britain would "no longer think in terms of a completely independent foreign policy".

The Tory Government's policy will lead to a further weakening of Britain's position in relation to the United States and West Germany. As this becomes clear, opposition to it will grow, and embrace wider sections of the British people.

II. Developments of N.A.T.O. Policy

Yet despite the divisions and uncertainties in the Western camp, the dominant forces in N.A.T.O. have a quite clear, definite and extremely dangerous aim.

What they are doing is *adjusting* their war strategy—not abandoning it. The adjustment is on the basis that there shall be *no* disarmament, but increased armaments; *no* ban on nuclear weapons or a suspension of tests, but a wider distribution of nuclear weapons and continued tests; and *no* negotiations with the Soviet Union.

The *aim*, therefore, is the same as that of the previous discredited and bankrupt policies. It is this that makes Western tactics at present so menacing and so adventurist.

The general direction in which Western military and political thinking has been moving is towards a "new doctrine" to supplement "massive retaliation". This new doctrine is that of "limited atomic war".

There is some argument as to whether the British or Americans originated it. It was certainly foreshadowed to some extent in the speech made by Mr. Dulles on December 8th, 1955, in which, speaking of the flexible use of power, he said that "our capacity to retaliate . . . would be selective and adapted to the occasion" and that the free world "must not put itself in the position where the only response open to it is general war".

From Chatham House to Kissinger

But the case for limited war was first presented in extended form in a forty-six-page British pamphlet published in 1956 by the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House), entitled *On Limiting Atomic War*.[1]

The theme was developed from an American angle and at very much greater length in a 450-page book published in 1957, entitled *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, by Henry A. Kissinger.[1]

In September 1957 the American Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dulles, more or less set the stamp of official approval on the doctrine in a speech at the United Nations and in an article in the U.S. journal *Foreign Affairs*.

In discussing these proposals for "limited atomic war", it is important to understand that they are not being advanced by unimportant or "lunatic fringe" organisations or individuals. Both the British and the American statements are the product of discussions in which some of the most prominent figures in the two countries took part.

Dr. Kissinger's book was published for the United States Council on Foreign Affairs. It is based on the work of a study group which included Gordon Dean, former Chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission; Thomas K. Finletter, former U.S. Air Force Secretary; General Walter Bedell Smith, former Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency; and thirty other prominent Americans, including a number of representatives of big business described as "persons who had been hardened by the realities of the business world".

The British Chatham House pamphlet was produced as a result of discussions held during the summer of 1956 by Rear-Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard, Director of Naval Intelligence,

[1] These publications will be identified in the remainder of this article as "Chatham House" and "Kissinger" respectively.

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1951-4; Professor P. M. S. Blackett, a Nobel prize-winner; Denis Healey, Labour M.P.; and Richard Goold-Adams.

Apart from the relative lengths, there are also other considerable differences between the British and American statements. But broadly speaking, the thesis of both is the same.

Global War Means Suicide

They start from the proposition that global war now means mutual suicide. Dr. Kissinger devotes considerable space to showing what horrors nuclear war would bring to the United States and to explaining that in "all-out" war tremendous devastation and loss of life could not be avoided. He was writing before the announcement that the Soviet Union possessed the inter-continental ballistic missile, which he did not expect to be developed before 1963 (p. 123).

It is significant that despite his condemnation of previous United States under-estimation of Soviet capabilities, Dr. Kissinger himself shows in this passage that he also continued greatly to under-rate the Soviet Union.

It is also interesting to contrast this present American approach with what was fashionable when American imperialism thought it had the monopoly of nuclear weapons. Then there was no talk about the damage that would be done by war in *America*. The talk was all of devastating the Soviet Union. Recall, for instance, the notorious issue of *Collier's Magazine* in 1951, devoted to an account of what would happen after the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Third World War, which was based on the assumption that the United States would remain relatively immune.

The authors of the British pamphlet, on the other hand, waste no time in describing what a nuclear war would mean for Britain. Presumably they take for granted that the public is already aware, from the Government White Papers as well as the statements of scientists and others, that Britain as we know it would cease to exist.

British Government policy was, as will be remembered, expressed in the speech of Duncan Sandys in Australia on August 20th, 1957:

> "We decided not to defend the whole country but to defend only our bomber bases. I must pay tribute to the people of Britain for the readiness with which they have accepted these harsh but inescapable facts."
>
> (*The Times*, August 21st, 1957)

Dr. Kissinger seems as little concerned as Sandys about the British people (who were never consulted about this policy they are supposed to have readily accepted). But Dr. Kissinger at any rate wants some effort to be made to protect American civilians, though, it must be pointed out, mainly because "excessive suffering tends to tear the social fabric apart" and because "civil defence can contribute to the cohesiveness of society in the face of massive shock". (*Kissinger*, p. 115.)

Kissinger's Thesis

Kissinger's argument may be expressed in the following propositions:

1. It is impossible to renounce force. "In a society of 'sovereign' states, a power can in the last resort vindicate its interpretation of justice or defend its 'vital interests' only by the willingness to employ force." (p. 4.)

2. But since "all-out" war is to be avoided if at all possible, reliance on it alone paralyses the West.

> "Our traditional insistence on reserving our military effort for an unambiguous threat and then going all out to defeat the enemy may lead to paralysis when total war augurs social disintegration even for the victor." (p. 15.)

3. It is therefore necessary to work out "applications of power less catastrophic than all-out thermo-nuclear war"—that is, limited wars.

> "There exist three reasons, then, for developing a strategy of limited war. First, limited war represents the only means for preventing the Soviet bloc, at an acceptable cost, from over-running the peripheral areas of Eurasia. Second, a wide range of military capabilities may spell the difference between defeat and victory even in an all-out war. Finally, intermediate applications of our power offer the best chance to bring about strategic changes favourable to our side." (p. 147.)

It will be observed that the above reasoning depends on the assumption that the "Soviet bloc" intends to "over-run" various areas. But in fact Dr. Kissinger by no means presents the picture in conventional terms of "Soviet aggression".

He is, of course, well aware, as are the rulers of America and Britain, that the Soviet Union has no aggressive aims and will never commit aggression. Such a crude justification of Western policy is all right for the millionaire press. It will not do in a serious attempt to expound a strategy for the West.

"Imperialism Must Be Preserved"

Dr. Kissinger is not in fact worried about "Soviet aggression". He is worried about the *survival of imperialism*. He therefore goes to great pains to explain that the danger the West faces is *not* so much "open aggression" as "subversion"—that is, *internal* changes in various countries.

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"We are certain to be confronted with situations of extraordinary ambiguity, such as civil wars or domestic coups. Each successive Soviet move is designed to make our moral position that much more difficult; Indo-China was more ambiguous than Korea; the Soviet arms deal with Egypt more ambiguous than Indo-China; the Middle Eastern crisis more ambiguous than the arms deal with Egypt. . . .

"It would be comforting if we could confine our actions to situations in which our moral, legal and military positions are completely in harmony and where legitimacy is most in accord with the requirements of survival. But, as the strongest power in the world, we will probably never again be afforded the simple moral choices on which we could insist in our more secure past." (pp. 428-429.)

When we penetrate behind the "ambiguous" language of these phrases, what do they mean?

That a threat to the position of imperialism anywhere and from whatever source (Indo-China, Egypt, the Middle East are specifically mentioned, as are "civil wars and domestic coups") is interpreted as *Soviet aggression* and becomes the pretext for limited war.

This is spelled out on p. 252, where a series of questions are posed, including the following:

"Is a Soviet base in the Middle East aggression when it is stocked with weapons or only when Soviet troops appear against the will of the indigenous government? . . .

"Are we opposed to the forcible expansion of Communism, or is the existence of a Communist regime in some areas a threat to our security, however the regime is established? Do we resist Communist domination of an area only when it is 'illegal' or because the domination of Eurasia by Communism would upset the strategic balance?"

Thus the implication is that limited nuclear war might be launched if a *legal, constitutionally* established regime came into existence somewhere which the United States McCarthyites didn't like and therefore called it "Communist".

If the *moral* position of the West is in doubt, or its *legal* position, that is just too bad. What is decisive is not "legitimacy" but the "requirements of survival"—*the survival of imperialism.*

This is simply another way of saying that the survival of imperialism depends on war. But it is recognised that all-out war would probably end imperialism ("total war augurs social disintegration even for the victor"). Therefore, the preservation of imperialism demands a new doctrine—that of "limited war".

This, and not peaceful co-existence, is the openly-avowed aim of these spokesmen of imperialism:

"Limited war and the diplomacy appropriate to it provide a means to escape from the sterility of the quest for absolute peace which paralyses by the vagueness of its hopes, and of the search for absolute victory which paralyses by the vastness of its consequences."

(*Kissinger*, p. 223)

They propose to launch limited nuclear wars, and, as they say, try to put the responsibility for any extension of such wars on the Soviet Union:

"A strategy of limited war, then, would use our retaliatory power as a means to permit us to fight local actions on our own terms and to shift to the other side the risk of initiating all-out war."

(*Kissinger*, p. 149)

III. "Limited War"

It is first necessary to get clear what is meant by "limited war" and why its advocates are always careful to speak of limited *atomic* war.

The average person, in thinking of the possibility of limiting war, can see some reason and practicability in agreeing *not to use atomic weapons.*

But this is *not* what the new strategists mean. Dr. Kissinger, in fact, argues *against* limiting war on the basis of conventional weapons on the grounds that this would "play into the hands of Soviet 'ban the bomb' propaganda". (p. 190.)

He and the author of the Chatham House pamphlet go out of their way to insist that the limited wars *must be nuclear wars.* They specifically *exclude* conventional wars.

They insist on *nuclear* wars because, they claim, these will be to the advantage of the West:

"The choice between conventional and nuclear war then becomes an essentially practical one: which side is likely to gain from adopting limited nuclear war? Here our superior industrial potential, the broader range of our technology and the adaptability of our social institutions should give us the advantage."

(*Kissinger*, p. 194)

But if the "limited" wars are *nuclear* wars, how limited would they really be?

Nature of the "Limited Wars"

In the size of the bombs used? The British authors point out:

"It is all too easy to treat lesser atomic weapons as of little consequence. In reality by any previous standards they are huge and terrible in their effect; 'tactical' weapons do not mean just hand-grenades."

They say the bombs used should, however, "not come near the megaton range". But Dr.

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Kissinger says the limitation should be half-a-megaton (equal to 500,000 tons of T.N.T.). This would mean using bombs *twenty-five times as powerful* as those used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The lowest estimates of deaths there were 70,000 and 40,000 respectively.

Thus in the *character of the weapons used,* these so-called "limited wars" would in fact be worse by far than the Second World War.

No doubt realising that such a prospect will hardly commend itself to the people of America or Europe, the limited warriors endeavour to reassure them.

The whole idea is that the limited wars will be waged *outside America*: they should therefore cause little concern to the American people except in so far as American soldiers are involved. As in the case of the last two world wars, the proposal is that others will be bombed while the Americans watch the wars on television.

Dr. Kissinger exempts the Americans; the British pamphlet exempts the Europeans (except possibly those at the "geographical extremities of Europe proper"). It strongly argues that Western Europe is so vital to both sides, so densely populated, and has such critically important sections, "notably the Ruhr", that it is a "special case", an "exception".

So they argue that peace will be maintained in Western Europe "by virtue of the over-all thermo-nuclear stalemate"—that is, they return to the doctrine of "massive retaliation" when they deal with Europe.

But Dr. Kissinger will have none of this. In a chapter devoted to "American strategy and N.A.T.O." he strongly condemns the past N.A.T.O. strategy of reliance on all-out war, and calls for "the strategy of a local defence based on nuclear weapons".

Since "none of our allies, not even Great Britain, can be considered major powers any longer", he is naturally against them trying to behave like Great Powers—a role reserved in the West for the United States.

He therefore attacks British "all-out" strategy as outlined in the last three Defence White Papers, saying that it reflects a desire to remain a World Power "despite the losses suffered in two world wars", but that:

> "Great Britain cannot hope to win or even to conduct an all-out war without United States assistance. It would therefore seem to have been wiser for Britain to concentrate on developing forces for limited war and for the local defence of Europe." (p. 277.)

"Limited War" and Europe

What the "local defence of Europe" could mean is shown in the account he gives of "Exercise Carte-Blanche" carried out in June 1955 by the allied air forces in Central Europe. In this, 355 nuclear bombs were "dropped" in forty-eight hours, resulting in the "total devastation" of the whole area between Heligoland, Salzburg, Dunkirk and Dijon.

He argues that N.A.T.O. has come to a fork in the road. According to him, America is being asked to bear a disproportionate burden. The West European countries are dragging their feet.

They must now go all out to prepare for limited nuclear war, equipping and training their armies for this purpose.

N.A.T.O., he says:

> "Can no longer reconcile an all-out strategy with an inadequate and half-hearted effort of local defence."

He is therefore in favour of Western Europe, already the scene of the greatest build-up and concentration of tactical atomic weapons, having even more such weapons, and of as many West European powers as possible becoming nuclear powers:

> "One of the banes of our alliance policy has been the exclusion of the Continental powers from the nuclear race. . . ." (p. 311.)

Dr. Kissinger maintains that limited nuclear war is possible even in Europe. The British advocates of limited war realise quite well that such a war would mean a global "all-out" war. But their advocacy of the idea of limited war plays into the hands of American strategists like Dr. Kissinger. And it is the Americans rather than the British who finally determine the strategy of N.A.T.O.

Thus the prospect is that the policy of equipping the N.A.T.O. forces in Europe with tactical atomic weapons and training the armies in their use will not only be continued but greatly speeded up. As this article is being written, Mr. Dulles is declaring that American guided missile bases will be established in Europe, and such weapons supplied to Western European countries which want them; and it is announced that the West German Foreign Minister is flying to Washington to discuss questions coming up at the forthcoming N.A.T.O. meeting.

Unless this policy is stopped, it will bring the most terrible disaster on the people of Europe.

IV. Western War Policy and Afro-Asia

What of the people of the rest of the world? For if America is excluded from the doctrine of limited war, and if the British want to exclude Western Europe, what remains? Principally the Afro-Asian countries.

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In seeking to relieve the minds of Americans and Europeans, the advocates of limited war only arouse the fear and anger of hundreds of millions of people in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The dilemma is recognised in the Chatham House publication:

> "There would certainly be an immense psychological and political reaction if a white country again used atomic weapons against Asians. The bitter condemnation throughout Asia and, indeed, among all coloured peoples might well outweigh any tactical military advantages." (p. 40.)

And then, in a phrase which shows an extraordinary contempt for the people and a peculiar callousness, they add that the reaction will "certainly remain very strong, at least until an atomic weapon has first been used against a non-coloured people"—as if that would render the prospect of being roasted, blasted and radio-activised to death any more palatable to coloured people anywhere!

Despite this prospect of antagonising the coloured peoples, the advocates of limited war make it clear that it is precisely in such areas that they envisage the limited wars taking place:

> "The most likely places in which these weapons would in fact be used if the Communists attacked, are Asia and the Middle East."
> (*Chatham House*, p. 40)

As for Dr. Kissinger, he talks repeatedly of the "peripheral areas of Asia and the Middle East".

Contempt for Afro-Asia

He can scarcely conceal his contempt for the newly liberated countries, first dismissing their great struggles for independence with the phrase, "Empires which had held vast dominions for hundreds of years disappeared without a battle being fought", and continuing, "it is imperative that the uncommitted powers understand not only the benefits but also the duties of independence".

"Condescending as it may seem to say so," he continues:

> "The United States has for this reason an important educational task to perform in the uncommitted third of the world. By word and deed we must demonstrate that the inexorable element of international relations resides in the necessity to combine principle with power, that an exclusive reliance on moral pronouncements may be as irresponsible as the attempt to conduct policy on the basis of considerations of power alone."

This means, he adds, that "the United States, therefore, requires a twentieth-century equivalent of showing the flag". (pp. 263-4.)

Hence, no doubt, the U.S. Sixth Fleet movements in the Middle East in recent months.

This arrogant and contemptuous attitude to the peoples of Asia and Africa helps to explain the callous way in which Dr. Kissinger can discuss "limited" atomic wars which would undoubtedly involve the death of hundreds of thousands, and probably millions, of Asians, Arabs or Africans, and the devastation of their countries. It also explains why American policy, based as it is on contempt for the people and under-estimation of their power, is doomed to failure.

This, however, brings us to a further contradiction in the argument. Let us take the Middle East, which, it is claimed, could be the scene of a limited nuclear war. What would be the motive for the West initiating such a war? What the Chatham House pamphlet calls "the crucial role of oil in all modern industry" which has made the Middle East "an area almost as vital to Western survival as Western Europe itself".

From "Limited" to Global War

It would presumably be maintained in justification of limited war there, that the oil was in danger because of Arab nationalism (of course, "inspired by Soviet Communism") and therefore action was necessary.

But does anyone seriously believe that in such a war the oil wells would be spared? Is it not obvious that the *surest* way to lose our oil supplies would be to start a so-called limited atomic war in the Middle East?

This is apart altogether from the question of whether *any* war started in so crucial an area of the world would not rapidly spread. We should recall that in the recent Turkish-Syrian crisis, Mr. Dulles dropped all talk of "limited war" and threatened action against the Soviet Union itself.

This is further proof that there is the gravest risk, amounting almost to certainty, that *any* atomic war, however limited at the outcome, would rapidly extend to global war.

There is also in both publications a remarkable air of unreality about the efforts to lay down the "rules" for a limited atomic war. No bombs above half a megaton. No towns above a certain size to be attacked. The bases of the opposing strategic air force not to be attacked. All cities within 500 miles of the battle zone to be immune if declared "open". These are some of Dr. Kissinger's proposals, and they roughly follow the same lines as those of the British pamphlet.

Presumably anyone inadvertently dropping a half-megaton bomb on a large city would be declared offside and sent off the field till the game was over.

The Chatham House author actually gets to the point of urging that little errors (such as, one

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assumes, dropping a bomb on an "open" city and thus killing tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of civilians) should be overlooked, since mistakes will happen even in the best regulated wars:

> "Both sides should be anxious, not reluctant, to overlook an occasional breach of the distinctions and limitations, in the belief that this might be due, as it so easily could be, to error rather than to deliberate policy."
>
> (*Chatham House*, p. 41)

But errors and omissions excepted, even if all the "rules" were observed, what about the unfortunate inhabitants in the cities *below* the agreed size, or those not declared open? Dr. Kissinger tells us at great length about the consequences of nuclear war *in America*. He is silent on its results in "peripheral areas".

The fact is that the "limited wars" will result in the slaughter of vast numbers of people. They are certainly not all going to be fought in deserts. Otherwise what would be the point of using nuclear weapons at all?

Why Not Disarm?

Moreover, it is obvious that if drawing up "rules" of limited war is desirable, it would involve as many, if not more, complications than a full-scale disarmament agreement.

If it is considered practicable to get an agreement of this character on "limited war", what on earth is to prevent agreement on limiting arms? Why not devote the time, energy and ingenuity to this far more laudable aim?

But here again we come up against a brick wall. Disarmament is the last thing Dr. Kissinger wants. His "limited war" strategy does not even have the merit of economy.

It involves *greater* expenditure on armaments.

First of all, nuclear disarmament is excluded from consideration. With the entire Western strategy based on nuclear weapons, they are regarded as essential:

> "Since negotiations on outstanding disputes have proved unavailing, it is improbable that a disarmament scheme acceptable to all parties can be negotiated. A general disarmament scheme to be successful must deprive each party of the ability to inflict a catastrophic blow on the other; at the very least it must not give an advantage to either side. A meaningful agreement is, therefore, almost impossible."
>
> (*Kissinger*, p. 208)

Since the banning of all atomic weapons is ruled out in favour of developing the so-called "clean" weapons, the suspension of tests is also impossible, for these are needed to develop the "clean" bombs.

Indeed, the lunatic logic of the advocates of limited war actually enables them to attack the Soviet Union for wanting to stop tests, and accuse it of being in favour of "terror" weapons. This was the allegation of Mr. Dulles on September 19th, 1957:

> "The Soviet Union seems not to want the character of nuclear weapons thus to be refined and changed. It seems to like it that nuclear weapons can be stigmatised as 'horror' weapons."

Dr. Kissinger makes clear that his policy involves far greater arms expenditure, not less.

For the "limited wars" are not a *substitute* for the capacity for "massive retaliation". They are an *addition* to it.

> "We can make a strategy of limited war stick only if we leave no doubt about our readiness and our ability to face a final showdown. Its effectiveness will depend on our willingness to face up to the risks of Armageddon." (p. 173.)

He therefore argues that "an increase in expenditures is essential, both to improve our readiness for all-out war, and to bring about the capability for limited war described earlier". He wants almost to double the size of the American Army so as to give it twenty-eight divisions instead of seventeen.

It is not necessary to look any further than his book to find an explanation of the American refusal to agree, in the United Nations Disarmament discussions, to any measures of disarmament.

V. Strengthen the Fight for Peace

To read these two publications, with their cold-blooded calculations and their assumptions of the inevitability of nuclear wars, is to realise the urgent need for a more powerful movement for peace.

The authors themselves underline the importance of public opinion. They are keenly aware of the resistance to nuclear war which exists and the necessity to break it down if their policy is to be implemented:

> "The decision to resist aggression by nuclear war requires a diplomacy which seeks to break down the atmosphere of special horror which now surrounds the use of nuclear weapons. . . ."
>
> (*Kissinger*, p. 190)

> "One of the chief tasks of United States policy in N.A.T.O., therefore, is to overcome the trauma which attaches to the use of nuclear weapons and to decentralise the possession of nuclear weapons as rapidly as possible. Nothing would do so much to dispel the air of mystery that surrounds nuclear weapons as their possession by the Continental powers." (Ibid. p. 311.)

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The British authors pay special attention to the need to "educate" the public into accepting the possibility of limited wars because, as they put it:

> "If public opinion in the West believes—as it does at present—that the use of any atomic weapon means starting down the slippery slope that ends with the H-bomb, then the democratic Governments will have their hands tied behind their backs." (*Chatham House*, p. 12)

The aim of the limited war propaganda is psychological, as well as military.

The Aim of "Limited War" Policy

It is intended to lead to passivity on the part of the people of America and Western Europe by persuading them that all-out war is now a remote contingency and that limited wars will be fought elsewhere.

It is intended to justify huge and increasing arms expenditures at a time when people all over the world feel that the lesson of the *sputniks* is that agreement on disarmament is not only desirable but a desperate necessity.

It is intended to prepare the way for Western aggression against national movements on the ground that they constitute indirect Soviet aggression and can be suppressed by limited atomic wars without the danger of developing into global wars.

Although the advocates of limited war condemn Mr. Dulles's "brinkmanship", they are in fact trying to get public opinion conditioned to accept a policy which would not only lead us to the brink but plunge us over it into a third world war.

For the most terrifying thing about this doctrine is that it seeks to break down the instinctive and powerful feeling against the use of force which exists in these days of nuclear war.

At the very best, limited atomic war would be a gigantic gamble—a gamble on the chance that it would not develop into world war. It would mean the *certainty*, not the risk, of death for those actually involved; and it would in reality not even be a gamble—it could not be limited, but would extend into global war.

What is appalling is that a Labour M.P. should be involved in advocating this policy, and that Labour's Shadow Defence Minister, George Brown, M.P., should play a prominent part in the N.A.T.O. Parliamentarian discussions in November, defending, as he said, "the White Paper of Mr. Duncan Sandys against some of the other Europeans." (*Daily Express*, November 12th, 1957.)

Labour should have nothing to do either with the Tory Government's existing nuclear strategy nor the modification of it urged in the Chatham House pamphlet.

No more striking demonstration of the need for a peace movement could be found than in these two publications. They show how vital it is that there should be in existence an organised movement in each country, in contact with the movements in other countries and in continuous readiness to take action for peace.

Need for the Peace Movement

Indeed, Dr. Kissinger himself is forced to pay tribute to the work of the World Peace Movement:

> "Starting with the Stockholm Peace Appeal in 1950, for which, according to Communist sources, more than 500 million signatures were obtained throughout the world, the Peace Movement has been conducting a well-organised campaign to stimulate mass protests and mass actions against the use of nuclear weapons." (p. 374.)

This tribute should be the greatest encouragement to all in the peace movement to increase their efforts.

But even more the present international situation calls for a great extension in the activity of the peace forces. Complacency is always dangerous. Today it can be fatal.

The Macmillan-Eisenhower talks, the N.A.T.O. Council meeting, and the arguments for limited nuclear war all show that the Western imperialists are still refusing to learn the lessons of the past few years.

They still refuse to abandon their dreams of successful aggression, in one form or another, to "bring about strategic changes favourable to our side", as Dr. Kissinger puts it in a previously quoted passage. They cannot get rid of the illusion that nuclear weapons will always work to the advantage of the West, and never to its disadvantage.

The dying beast is sometimes the most dangerous. A criminal in a panic is more likely, not less likely, to use his gun.

Hence the need for action by the people to change the present disastrous Western policy, force summit talks, compel an end to tests, and bring about the banning of nuclear weapons and an agreement on disarmament.

Joining and helping in the activity of the British Peace Committee and the local peace committees; initiating discussions and action in working class organisations; demanding that M.P.s speak and vote in Parliament for a peace policy; helping public opinion to express itself in every possible form—these are some of the ways in which ordinary people can influence events and check the war plans.

There can be no more important work today.

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Marxism and the British Labour Movement—1880-1900

Lionel Munby

THERE is nothing new in the argument that Marxism is alien to Britain, that it has never really counted for anything in the British Labour movement. Ramsay MacDonald wrote in 1908 in *Socialism and Society:* "The conceptions of social evolution, which Marx held, never have been accepted by the majority of British Socialists." E. F. M. Durbin in 1940 in *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* agreed that "the Marxist theory of history and the Communist theory of political strategy derived from that theory . . . has been immensely influential in the formation of working-class opinion [in all countries but this]". Earl Attlee in *The Labour Party in Perspective* suggested an alternative: "One must seek the inspiration of the majority of British Socialists in other directions [than Karl Marx]. . . . I think that the first place in the influences that built up the Socialist movement must be given to religion."

The very constant repetition of the refrain is, perhaps, some evidence that Marxism *has* long been a vital practical and ideological factor in British life. But British Marxists need to study their own history much more closely and much more critically if they are really to answer the argument. The final and most effective answer is, of course, in the realm of practice, in the election of Marxist leaders by British trade unions and Socialist organisations, in the adoption of Marxist policies, but working for this should not excuse neglect of our history. Once one begins to look at this two facts are clear: Marxists and Marxism have played a vital part in the development of the British Labour movement over the last seventy years; but the Marxists have always been few in number and seldom, if ever, provided an accepted leadership for the whole Labour movement. Understanding how and why this has been so is vital to us, if we are to learn how to change capitalist Britain into a socialist society. To achieve this understanding a study of the particular ways in which imperialism developed in Britain, of their effects on the Labour movement and of the development of that Labour movement is necessary. The purpose of this article is to begin the study of one small part of this field, to try to show, first, that socialism in Britain revived in the 1880s as Marxism and, secondly, to suggest why the Marxists failed to form an effective revolutionary party able to give the working class as a whole a continuous leadership, independent of capitalist ideas and influences. The consequences of both the success and the failure of this period have been with us ever since. Each generation of Marxists needs two kinds of historical articles, both essential to its development, those which inspire it by example and those which help it to learn by critical analysis. We have had some, not enough, of the former and too few by far of the latter kind.

Marxists have often explained the success of forms of "British" socialism and the weakness of Marxism in Britain as a consequence of Britain's privileged imperial position. There can be no doubt that this is the objective factor which has determined the development of the modern British Labour movement. Important studies of how this factor worked have been made by E. J. Hobsbawm, but much more needs to be done. It would, however, be a tragedy if British Marxists consoled themselves with the thought that they were the victims of an historical process, of the strength and corruption of imperialism, for which they bore no responsibility. Men's "social being determines their consciousness", but "theory becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses". The past theoretical and political mistakes of British Marxists, excusable in the context in which they occurred, can, if not studied and understood, keep us prisoners in our past just when the objective factors change in our favour. It will not follow automatically that, as Britain loses a privileged imperialist position, the British working class accept Marxist leadership.

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1881-89 The Birth of Modern Socialism in Britain

In 1880 no organisation existed in this country with any kind of Socialist programme or theory. The relatively strong trade union and co-operative movements supported in the main the Liberal Party, though some sections supported the Conservatives. In 1881 Frederick Engels, long resident in England and familiar with British working-class leaders, described the situation of the British working class as "a political position unworthy of the best organised working class in Europe"; he went on to call for "a working men's political party . . . backed by forty or fifty representatives in Parliament". In June 1881, one month before Engels' article in the London Trades Council's *Labour Standard* was written, the Democratic Federation had united a number of London radical working class clubs. H. M. Hyndman, its moving spirit, produced a programme, *England for All*, which he obliquely admitted owed much to Marx "for the ideas and much of the matter contained" in the chapters on Labour and Capital.

This development was quite logical. Marx and Engels always had a considerable influence in British working-class circles; and Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling came from the family circle into the Socialist movement of the eighties. The Paris Commune had more influence on British opinion than is sometimes believed and surviving Communards settled in Britain. There was a general intellectual ferment in the seventies: Darwin and Huxley's ideas led people like Belfort Bax and Annie Besant through a criticism of religion to a criticism of society; Liberal Party ineffectiveness in the face of Disraeli's jingoist war hysteria led William Morris and many working men to look for some more effective political organisation. From such sources came Britain's pioneer Marxists just when a crisis ended the heyday of Britain's established competitive capitalism. The "Great Depression" of 1874-96 marked the evolution of this capitalism into monopoly, into imperialism. Lenin wrote "in the sixties and seventies, the highest, furthermost stage of development of free competition" had been reached; by the time of "the boom at the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900-3, cartels had become transformed into imperialism". In these years of crisis both ruling-class and working-class ideas were in the melting pot. In 1884 the Democratic Federation adopted a Marxist programme and changed its name to Social Democratic, then the common name for all Marxist parties.

But in December of the same year William Morris, supported by Engels, led the majority of the Executive Council with the Avelings, Belfort Bax and J. L. Mahon out of the Social Democratic Federation to form the Socialist League. For the rest of the eighties two rival Marxist sects faced each other; in spite of Morris's efforts to create all possible unity between them, they remained divided. The Socialist League challenged Hyndman's parliamentary opportunism but itself drifted rapidly into anarchism. The Marxist leaders left it, Morris one of the last in November 1890, and it was soon dead. Many of the Marxists who left the Socialist League rejoined the Social Democratic Federation or worked with it.

Socialism Returns as Marxism

The vital historical fact about Britain in the 1880s is that Socialism had come back and had come back as Marxism. There were at the end of the decade only a handful of Socialists in Britain, but these Socialists were Marxists. The Fabian organisation, until the *Fabian Essays* just before Christmas 1889, was a parlour group of cranks unknown to anyone but themselves. If some of their members were known outside, it was not because they were Fabians but because they were also members of the Social Democratic Federation or Socialist League. Through the journals, *Justice* and *Commonweal*, through pamphlets, speeches and debates, through original works of fiction, on economics and on history, key sections of the British working class, men like Tom Mann, were educated as Marxists. The impact was not unlike that of the expanded publication by Lawrence and Wishart in the 1930s, and the Socialists of the day had their Left Book Club in the Social Science Library. The solemn bourgeois treatises on Socialism of the late eighties and early nineties were in no doubt that Socialism was Marxism or German Socialism as it was sometimes described.

Why, then, did the Marxism of the eighties remain the possession of sects and not become the motive force of a party? Not because there were no Marxists able to lead the working class in vital struggles. In 1888 and 1889 it was Marxists who led the great industrial struggles, in which many of our modern trade unions were born. Britain's earlier "workshop of the world" monopoly had produced an aristocracy of labour. By the 1890s British capitalism was emerging from crisis; the new imperialism seduced the working class in new ways. This may explain why the British working class were not ready to follow Socialist leadership, why there were so few Marxists, but it cannot alone explain why British Marxists were unable to form an effective revolutionary party.

The usual explanation given by Marxists is because of Hyndman's sectarianism. But sectarianism was not limited to Hyndman and in any case

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what does it mean? The reason for the split between two groups of Marxists, as the notice of resignation handed in by the leaders of the future Socialist League stated, was "the attempt to substitute arbitrary rule . . . for fraternal co-operation contrary to the principles of Socialism"; "Hyndman's absolutism and self-seeking" was under attack. This had been exposed in a number of incidents, all of which revealed in Hyndman an unwillingness to accept self-criticism and in the Social Democratic Federation leadership a failure to understand how inner-party struggles can mature a political leadership. This personal autocracy was an expression of Hyndman's essential sectarianism. It was accurately and scathingly described by Morris at the time: "To my mind Hyndman's tendencies have led the Social Democratic Federation or at least were leading it into a futile and even dangerous policy. . . It has meant adventure, show and advertisement, which would have found us out in the long run, and shown us to be a small party without organisation and with no very clear aims.... Hence all these theatrical boasts and warnings about immediate violent revolution. . . . Hence also the perpetual sneers at, and abuse of, the Radicals, who, deluded as we must think them, are after all the men from whom our recruits must come... all of which mean waiting about to see what can be made of the political situation, if perhaps at the best one may attain to a sort of Bismarckian State Socialism. . ." Morris's real sense of revolutionary responsibility is well brought out in his reference to the Radicals, which still has significance for us, if we substitute "Labour supporters". Morris continued: "I cannot stand all this, it is not what I mean by Socialism either in aim or means; I want a real revolution, a real change in Society."

Imperialism Not Understood

Now Hyndman was not a police spy nor a fraud; though he was a vain person and later became politically corrupted, he contributed considerably to the development of Marxism in Britain for a quarter of a century. Why did he behave like this? Essentially because he did not understand the changes taking place in the capitalist society of his day. He was not alone in this; the first analysis of "Imperialism" was not written until 1916, and was first available in English in 1919-20. Marxists still thought of capitalism as competitive capitalism. Hyndman never really understood the growth of monopoly capitalism and imperialism; consequently he passed his political life in a Quixotic tilting at the windmills of a dying and dead free competition capitalism. The economic change was accompanied by changes in the British state apparatus; it grew much stronger and more efficient, the Civil Service was reformed and enlarged, the modern party system and party machines developed. The current ideas of the ruling class changed. "Corporate" ideas challenged the old philosophy of individualism in economic, political and even in religious life. The employers formed trade associations, welcomed state interference on their behalf in economic matters, abandoning *laissez-faire*. The older capitalist ideology of *laissez-faire* resisted the development of state socialist and state capitalist ideas, just as the Liberal Party resisted (in vain) the advance of the reorganised Conservative Party, and this greatly confused contemporary Socialists. They did not understand the nature of the state, its class character. Because they did not understand the state or the development of monopoly capitalism, they could only see the issue as between state control and *laissez-faire*. Sidney Webb in *Socialism in England*, written in 1889, propagated the confusion: "The Socialist is distinguished from the Individualist . . . by a complete difference as to the main principles of social organisation. The essential contribution of the century to sociology has been the supersession of the Individual by the Community . . . Socialism is the product of this development." It is no accident that Marxism was so often described at this time as "German Socialism", the country not only of Marx and Engels but also of Bismarck, the first exponent of state capitalism disguised as socialism. William Morris's clarity in his generation is revealed in his understanding of this in his attack on Hyndman's aim of "a sort of Bismarckian State Socialism", which was developed fully in *News from Nowhere* ("How the change came").

This understanding led the Socialist League to an awareness of the danger of coquetting with the bourgeois parliament and state, which anticipated many of Lenin's ideas, but unfortunately they were not able to keep their foothold on the Striking Edge of revolutionary leadership; they fell down the other side into their own kind of sectarianism, becoming ultimately anarchist. The essential error to which Morris succumbed is given expression in a letter he wrote to Bruce Glasier on December 1st, 1886: "I did not mean that at some time or other it might not be necessary for Socialists to go into Parliament in order to break it up; . . . At present it is not worth while even thinking of that, and our sole business is to make Socialists. I really feel sickened at the idea of all the intrigue and degradation of concession which would be necessary to us as a parliamentary party, nor do I see any necessity for a revolutionary party doing any 'dirty work' at all, or soiling ourselves with anything that would unfit us for being due citizens of the new order of things." He returned to the same idea in his letter of May 23rd, 1887, to Dr. John Glasse, published by *Labour Monthly* in 1951. Morris argued that "Socialists will certainly send members to Parlia-

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ment—as rebels, and not as members of the governing body". He understood "the corrupting influence of a body professedly hostile to Socialism", but saw the solution in "keeping alive a body of Socialists of principle who will refuse responsibility for the action of the parliamentary portion of the party". Yet the independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party from the control of the National Executive and the annual congress has in fact been an important factor in developing and maintaining the leaderships of MacDonald, Attlee and Gaitskell. Communist Parties have properly refused to abdicate their responsibility in this way.

In the *British Road to Socialism* the British Communist Party has developed the idea that in the present phase of capitalist development Parliament can be used and transformed into an effective instrument to build socialism. This is a policy based on a proper understanding of the nature of the state in Britain today and of the alignment of class forces in Britain and the world. No revolutionary Socialist party was created in Britain in the 1880s because the Marxists of the time failed properly to understand the world in which they lived, in particular because they did not develop a Marxist understanding of imperialism and of the state. Lacking this understanding they were unable to combine revolutionary aims and the leadership of the still radical, that is non-socialist, mass of the working class. But this does not prove, as the MacDonalds and Attlees argued, that Marxism was unsuitable to British conditions. In fact the modern universal trade union movement of our country grew under the leadership of the best British Marxists of the day. The constitutions and mottoes with which they provided many unions, are evidence of this.

1889-1900: The Creation of a Working Class Party in Great Britain

The great industrial movement of the working class in 1889 and the succeeding years focused itself on the programme of an eight-hour day and rallied around the celebration of May 1st. In practice its leaders showed a much better understanding of the relationship between palliatives and revolutionary objectives than the official policies of the Social Democratic Federation or Socialist League indicated. While Morris and Hyndman were comparatively indifferent to the eight-hour-day campaign, its leaders were in most cases influenced by Marxist ideas which they had obtained from Social Democratic Federation and Socialist League literature and meetings. During the decade not only was trade union organisation expanded but gradually new leaders emerged and the unions acquired a Socialist purpose. A definite break with the ideas of *laissez-faire* competitive capitalism and with liberal politics took place. Throughout the decade before 1900 and the formation of the Labour Representation Committee there is a movement towards the creation of a working-class party independent of the capitalist class. In 1893 the Independent Labour Party was born and it is no accident that the finest British Marxist working-class leader of these years, Tom Mann, was its first secretary, as Keir Hardie, the best of all the class-conscious Socialists who failed to understand Marxism, was its inspirer and parliamentary representative.

The ruling class met the new strength and understanding of the working class on many fronts; their own strength and understanding had developed with the growth of monopoly capitalism. The 1890s saw tremendous battles in industry—lockouts of miners, a total lockout of engineers in 1897 and partly successful attacks on the new "general" unions of dockers, transport workers and others. This was combined with the first schemes for co-partnership in the gas industry. A legal attack on trade union rights paralleled the industrial attack, culminating in the famous Taff Vale case. And alongside all this an ideological onslaught against Marxism developed. This was not just a crude attack, though there were plenty of those. It tried to identify socialism with increased activity by the capitalist state in economic and social matters, and it developed a conscious "imperialist" ideology as a counter-weight to Marxism. It is from this period that the Conservative hold over parts of the working class really dates. Cecil Rhodes put the need clearly: "The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread-and-butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become an imperialist." Imperialism really was made popular. Lord Rosebery, the Liberal leader, talked to working-class audiences about *your* Empire and *your* responsibilities and was cheered. Joseph Chamberlain, who began as a Radical and ended as a Conservative, presented the imperialist vision so that it seemed to be a process by which monarchical, aristocratic Britain could shed the snob refuse from her past in a radical, egalitarian, almost republican community of colonies and dominions. The Fabian Socialist attitude to small, inefficient, backward nations, which led them into support for the Conservative Government's Boer War, was a direct reflection of the imperialism of Rudyard Kipling's *Recessional* and the "white man's burden".

British Marxists and the I.L.P.

Even so the ruling class in the 1890s were not able to deflect the key sectors of the working class from acquiring a heightened class consciousness and so moving towards Socialism. Engels supported

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the creation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893, because he, like Lenin later on, well understood the necessity of "carrying on activities right in the heart of the proletarian masses". This the Independent Labour Party could and did do, while the Social Democratic Federation still stood on the touchline waving a clean red flag. The Independent Labour Party was nearer to a party able to lead the working class in all forms of class struggle than any early organisation. Unfortunately it failed to become a real leadership for the whole working class of the day, partly because of the effectiveness of the imperialist appeal, and partly because the Independent Labour Party lacked the essential element of a revolutionary party, a clear understanding of socialist theory. It was, however, the most important force working for Socialism in the 1890s.

Why did the Independent Labour Party develop in this way, and not as Engels hoped into the revolutionary party of the British working class? The Independent Labour Party could have become a mass working-class party, organised and inspired by Marxism. It did not because the weakness of British Marxism, the sectarianism of the Social Democratic Federation, left an ideological vacuum, which had to be filled by something else. The working class normally accept "the ruling ideas of each age . . . the ideas of its ruling class", however much their actions may conflict with these ideas. It was from these "ruling ideas" that there came a belief to inspire the Independent Labour Party in the absence of Marxism. The oldest, and perhaps the most important, non-Socialist ideology to grip the masses is the Christian religion. We have to face the fact that in Britain the bourgeois revolution was fought in religious terms. This left a heritage of religious ideas with a positive and even revolutionary content. Developments in the early nineteenth century carried some of this tradition into the working-class movement. The class struggle was often fought not against all religion and all the churches but within them and in religious terms. The popularity of the saying, "Bishops feasting, Curates fasting", suggests that this even affected the Anglican church. No doubt this unique British tradition is one reason why the Nonconformist influence continued so strong, effectively tying the radical working class to Gladstonian Liberalism. By the 1880s the churches were experiencing a conversion to Catholic theology, which was part of the general revival of the "corporate" idea, which parallels the development of imperialism. This was discussed at length in an article in the old *Modern Quarterly* in the autumn of 1950. A corporate theology gave an even better basis for dissociating religion from the ideas of an individualistic ruling class; and in some cases even made it possible apparently to associate religion directly with the strivings of the working class.

The Independent Labour Party simply absorbed this point of view. Keir Hardie spoke of this in 1910: "There is not and cannot be any antagonism between Christ and the Labour movement." Alongside the Independent Labour Party there was a great growth of Labour Churches, Socialist Sunday Schools, and Socialist Catechisms; hymns were given new words and hymn tunes used for Socialist songs. It would be a grave mistake to argue that this is all dead and done with since in the twentieth century, in spite of constant attempts at revival, religion is fast dying. It is not specific Christian socialism that matters. Moral standards which drew their strength from the Christian tradition mingled with the commonsense approach of Robert Blatchford's *Clarion*. The best-selling Socialist propaganda of the period was Blatchford's *Merrie England*. It was in part a popularisation of Fabian ideas, but they were so presented to Blatchford's readers that the only logical conclusion possible for a sane, rational and objective student of society was that its socialist reorganisation was superior to any other. Blatchford at the beginning of *Merrie England* stated he would "appeal to that robust common sense and English love of fair play"; "I shall stick to the hardest of hard facts, and the coldest of cold reason". The mixture of common sense and idealism gave to contemporaries the gleam, as Pollitt has called it, but it was unhistorical and undialectical; so it could not explain the movement of society; while it might inspire men in the struggle, it did not help them understand how to get where they wanted to go. This weakness of the Independent Labour Party was the responsibility of the Marxist leadership in Britain in the 1890s. Socialists began to speak the language of the working class and so ceased to be sectarian. They were therefore able to provide a leadership for the working class as a whole and not merely for sections of it. The essence of a real revolutionary party was in existence, but the only theory which could have enabled the new party to know where it was to lead the working class, was abandoned. The Marxist organisation, the Social Democratic Federation, stood aloof from the Independent Labour Party.

Keir Hardie's Attitude

Only a thorough study of Keir Hardie's life and conflicting ideas could bring out the full tragedy. Keir Hardie should have been an outstanding figure in a British Marxist leadership at this time. How near he came to this we can see in an admirably clear statement of 1896 (November 28th in *Labour Leader*) about the state: "We desire to use every means at our command to bring the change [to

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Socialism] about, and, finding the State all-powerful in so far as the ownership of property is concerned, we resolve to set to work diligently to capture the State machinery, so as to use it to aid us in our work of changing the ownership of land and capital from private into public property. . . . All forms of government in the world have for their primary object the protection of property and the subjugation by force of the common people—the working classes. But, say we, it does not follow that this must be the object of all governments. Given an intelligent, resolute, working-class electorate, forming a majority of the electors, and they may if they choose make the government represent them and their interests. . . . Socialists will, when they have a majority, secure control of the Government and all that it contains. . . . The property owners will probably try to rebel when this time comes, in which case they will be treated as rebels always have." But in 1904 (September *Labour Leader*) Keir Hardie attacked the idea that Socialism is founded on class consciousness: "Capitalism is the product of selfishness, and so long as selfishness, or as it is falsely named, individualism, continues, the evils of the present system will also remain."

Keir Hardie's confusion arose from his hostility to the Social Democratic Federation whose spokesmen tended to reiterate the idea of the class struggle as a dogma instead of using it as a guide to action. When the Labour Representation Committee was at last formed in 1900, the Social Democratic Federation joined, but in 1902 they disaffiliated themselves. This, the parent of the Labour Party, was a federation of trade unions, Co-ops and Socialist organisations of every hue. It was the perfect organisational answer for the working-class movement at its then level of development. It could have been the transmission belt, which Lenin saw was needed between the working class as a whole and their Marxist leadership, but Harry Quelch, one of the very best of the Social Democratic Federation Marxists, could only see the other side. In 1900 he wrote: "Trade unionists are anything—Liberal, Conservative, Radical, Home Rule, Socialist, Nothingarian (especially the latter); and while that is true there is little hope of combining them together for political action. When that is no longer true, we shall have a real working-class party, but that can only be when there is general agreement on basic principles." When the Social Democratic Federation disaffiliated from the new Labour Party it sought unity with the Independent Labour Party as the alternative; in 1902 Quelch put the dreadful alternatives: "There is but one obstacle to amalgamation, . . . if the Independent Labour Party prefers an alliance with non-Socialists or even anti-Socialists to Socialist unity, there is nothing more to be said. . . . Either the Independent Labour Party will break away [from the Labour Representation Committee and from the trade unions] and help to form one Socialist party, or it will allow itself to be led further and further away from Socialism, . . . In the meantime those who are for unity have but to work and wait."

Some Lessons

If there is a lesson it is surely that "keeping alive a body of Socialists of principle", as Morris put it, is not alone enough; nor is the practice of the "common touch", the effective mass leadership Keir Hardie achieved. Long ago in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx put the point: "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the working-class movement." This is why Engels supported the early Independent Labour Party although the Social Democratic Federation was in existence. Lenin wrote more precisely of the British working-class movement in its early years: "When objective conditions prevail which retard the growth of the political consciousness and class independence of the proletarian masses, one must be able patiently and persistently to work hand in hand with them, making no concessions to them in principles, but not refraining from carrying on activities right in the heart of the proletarian masses." The Social Democratic Federation's determination to have "general agreement on basic principles" prevented it from working effectively "right in the heart of the proletarian masses"; this is the root of sectarianism. The Independent Labour Party's desire to "work hand in hand with the proletarian masses" led to concession in principle; this is the root of revisionism.

Sectarianism and revisionism at the turn of the century fed upon one another. Keir Hardie was repelled by the aridity of the Marxists and the Marxists were disgusted by Keir Hardie's consequent concessions to capitalist ideas. This is surely an object lesson; a Marxist party in facing the danger uppermost at a given moment has to be extremely careful not to fall into the opposite error. This point was made for us today in Gollan's speech at the Twenty-Fifth Congress. But is there no escape from the seesaw? Why was the potential revolutionary leadership of the British working class in the 1880s and 1890s divided and driven into extremes of error, instead of united in effective action? I would suggest it was because while they learned Marxism they did not apply it to the particular situation they faced; they did not develop Marxism in the analysis of the actual contemporary national and international developments.

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Changes in Capitalism since the Second World War

Maurice Dobb

THIS has been the subject of a good deal of discussion in the Labour movement and in wider circles for some years; yet until quite recently (I think it is true to say) Marxists have contributed to this discussion little, if at all. Perhaps this was due to some kind of "perfectionism"—the feeling that it is undesirable to pronounce upon historical changes until one has the definitive answer and nothing less; perhaps it was due to some other reason. The following is an attempt to contribute to this discussion without believing that one has found the complete answer and without any pretence of covering the whole ground. (For example, except for an occasional side-glance, the international aspect, and in particular the imperialist contradictions of contemporary capitalism, are deliberately ignored.) The treatment of issues is rigorously selective, with the intention of focusing discussion upon some aspects of the matter to which Marxists (as well as others) seem to have paid relatively little attention hitherto.

Readers of *Marxism Today* may need no reminding that neo-Fabian writers have claimed that capitalism has either entered on a new and reformed stage that differs radically from the capitalism of the nineteenth century, or even has ceased to be capitalism and is already turning into something else. The latter claim is made by Mr. Crosland, who in the *New Fabian Essays* says: "It is now clear that capitalism is undergoing a metamorphosis into quite a different system and that this is rendering academic most of the traditional socialist analysis" (p. 35). The Socialist Union in its policy statement entitled *Twentieth Century Socialism* says that "the Welfare State, which is neither capitalism nor socialism, has been created" (p. 15). Mr. Strachey is a good deal more cautious than these others and contends merely that "a new and distinct stage of our extant economic system, namely capitalism, now exists in the advanced industrial communities", in which "the laws of development of the older stage of the system no longer fully apply to the new stage".[1]

Various reasons are adduced to justify this view; but three of them stand out as being of crucial importance. These are (i) the so-called "Managerial Revolution", (ii) the so-called "Income Revolution" of recent decades, (iii) the radically changed economic influence of the state especially since the Second World War. Let us examine these in turn to see whether they can be held, severally or jointly, to constitute an historical landmark, separating distinct periods, and explaining among other things the peculiar course of the trade cycle over the past twelve years.

"Managerial Revolution" and "Income Revolution"

Of these the first two, in my opinion, can be dismissed fairly quickly. The "Managerial Revolution" derives from a much-read and much-quoted book of that title by James Burnham, the burden of which was that power was already passing (during the inter-war period) out of the hands of capitalists, actuated in their policies by the traditional profit-motive, into the hands of a new class of salaried managers in charge of large industrial and financial corporations—managers who had a negligible stake, if any, in the ownership of the companies whose policies they controlled. This "revolution" was said to characterise all the most advanced countries of the world and to be rapidly extending its scope.

So far as it had a factual basis, this notion rested on the famous Berle and Means investigation of the late twenties into the ownership and control of the 200 largest non-financial corporations in U.S.A., with its revelation of the extensive divorce of ownership and control and the prevalence in these giant corporations of minority control (*de facto* control by persons

[1] John Strachey, *Contemporary Capitalism*, pp. 25-6.

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owning no more than a small fraction of the share capital). But to say that there is a partial divorce of ownership and control is not to say that this divorce is anything like complete (there has always been a good deal of "absentee capitalism"), and to speak of "minority control" is not the same thing as saying that control is in the hands of *non*-capitalists, still less that these controllers form a distinct class. Actually a reworking of the Berle and Means material in a 1940 T.N.E.C. Memorandum has shown that the number of cases where control was in the hands of persons with a negligible shareholding interest was considerably smaller than had been previously supposed;[1] and Sweezy has shown[2] that Burnham is very far from having proved that his "managers" constitute a homogeneous social group, let alone a class. This whole question will receive fuller treatment in *Marxism Today* on another occasion; and it must suffice here to affirm the conviction that talk about "managerial revolution" is an historical fantasy and that such "minority control" or "managerial control" as has developed has not significantly altered the motivation and functioning of monopoly capitalism.

Nor need the so-called "income revolution" detain us very long. The facts are now fairly familiar and accessible, and we need not spend time on analysing them in detail here. While the *post-tax* share in total income of the upper 1 per cent and 5 per cent of income-receivers[3] has fallen appreciably since 1938 in this country, and at the other end of the income-scale there has been a large reduction in the poverty-percentage (previously, in the inter-war years, kept high by unemployment), the share of wages in the national income has risen surprisingly little considering the increased strength of working class organisation during and since the war—by two or three points at most according to the current estimates. (What is often misleadingly quoted to show a sizable increase is the share of wages in *personal* incomes; but this omits undistributed profits which are evidently part of capitalists' income in a *class* sense and have risen considerably since the war). Moreover, it has to be borne in mind that the figures which show a fall in the upper income-brackets probably overstate the real position, since they do not take account of capital gains and expenditure from them (on which Mr. Kaldor's Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Taxation of Profits and Income laid so much emphasis); nor do they take account of the growing post-war habit of charging substantial expenditures to "expense accounts".

Not only in this country but also in the U.S.A talk of an "income revolution" has been based on much-quoted figures of a fall in the share of total income received by the upper 5 per cent of income-receivers. The evidence for this has been effectively examined in a recent article,[4] and the examination need not be repeated here, except to point out that the author of that article stresses, (*a*) the importance of both tax-evasion and expense accounts as serious qualifications of the usually-quoted figures, (*b*) the fact that the share in total income of the lowest three-tenths of American income-receivers has actually declined.

State Monopoly Capitalism

We come to the third of the above-mentioned changes, which cannot be dismissed so easily: the increased economic influence of the state. This has a much more serious factual basis. There has clearly been a big extension of state

[1] Temporary National Economic Committee Memo. No. 29, 56-7, 104 seq. Cf. the present writer's comments on this and the Berle and Means study in his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, pp. 350-2. R. Bellamy in an article in the *Marxist Quarterly*, January 1957, pp. 27-8, implies some doubt as to the interpretation of the facts in this T.N.E.C. Memo., and relies instead on the argument that managers are at any rate actuated by the same profit-motivation as capitalists even if they are salaried. It is to be noted, however, that even R. A. Gordon (who is cited by R. Bellamy in this connection) quotes an investigation of his own into American business executives, showing that a quarter of them had shareholdings of $1 million or more each in their own companies and others besides these had quite substantial holdings. (*Business Leadership in the Large Corporations*, pp. 42-4).

[2] Paul Sweezy, *The Present as History*, pp. 45-6, 57-63.

[3] That is, of the top 1 per cent and 5 per cent of incomes received when individual incomes are arranged according to size with the highest incomes at the top of the list. According to estimates of Dudley Seers (in *Oxford Bulletin of Statistics*, July and August 1949) the share of the top 1 per cent (approximately 200,000 families) fell between 1938 and 1947 only from 19 to 17 per cent *before tax*, but from 14 to 11 per cent *after tax*. The pre-tax share of the top 25 per cent was approximately stable (58 per cent in 1938 and 55 in 1947), but as a post-tax share fell from 54 per cent to 48. As regards the *lower* half of all incomes, this scarcely rose at all pre-tax, and even in terms of post-tax income rose only from 27 per cent to 30 per cent.

[4] Gabriel Kolko, "The American 'Income Revolution'" in *Universities and Left Review*, No. 2, pp. 9-14.

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monopoly capitalism since 1939—a development which I should personally regard as constituting a fairly crucial qualitative change so far as tendencies (which are by no means solely the product of the last two decades) towards state monopoly capitalism are concerned. Here again we must guard against exaggeration of this development—exaggeration to which neo-Fabian treatment of this question is prone; as for example the grotesque contention in Mr. Crosland's essay that the state "is now an independent intermediate power, dominating the economic life of the country . . . [and] this one change alone would justify the statement that the capitalist economy has now passed into history."[1] So far as direct control over production is concerned, there is relatively little (and less in U.S.A. and West Germany than in this country); the nationalised sector embracing no more than a fifth of all production and direct war-time controls having been liquidated in the course of the fifties (with one or two exceptions such as the modest powers to influence industrial location under the Development Areas Act). At the financial level, however, the influence of the state upon economic activity is considerably greater, in the shape of state *expenditure*, which has grown since before the war disproportionately to state ownership or control of the means of production. State influence over investment activity and hence the demand for capital goods is large enough to be quite an important factor here (not merely negatively through the Capital Issues Committee, but positively owing to the size of the investment expenditure of the nationalised sector and of central and local government, amounting during the fifties to nearly a half of gross investment, if housing is included). To this has to be added armaments expenditure (amounting to some 10 per cent of the national income). Evidently such expenditures have played an important part in maintaining the high level of industrial activity and employment that has been characteristic of the past twelve years. As I have said on a previous occasion:[2] "I think we have got to face it that these state capitalist tendencies have assured for capitalism a certain degree of stability that it did not possess in the inter-war period. . . . One can admit this without swallowing neo-Fabian fantasies about the 'American miracle' and a rejuvenated crisis-free capitalism."

The historical roots of this development of state monopoly capitalism are complex, and I shall not try to discuss them here. In large part they consist in the international conflicts of imperialism. It is noteworthy that the earliest departures from nineteenth century liberal (or *laissez-faire*) notions of the state's function were prompted by considerations of imperialist rivalry, and that the biggest development of state monopoly capitalism was during the two world wars. Much of the preoccupation of Government economic policy since 1945 has been with the export drive and control over the foreign-exchange value of the pound and over capital movement abroad; and it is arguable that the continuance into peace-time of such a large degree of state intervention and such a high level of governmental expenditure is bound up with the cold war and "militarisation of the economy" At the same time I cannot help thinking that this development has also to be treated as a reaction to the *internal* contradictions of the system that exploded so strikingly (and for the stability of the system so dangerously) in the crisis of the nineteen-thirties. What seems clear at any rate is that a considerable section of the capitalist class, much as they would like some unemployment "to bring the unions to heel", are in mortal fear that capitalism would not survive a repetition of 1929. (Whether they have the power to prevent it, for all their resort to "Keynesian stabilisers", is quite another matter.)

"Internal Accumulation"

Another feature of post-war capitalism deserves mention as having considerable potential importance for the process of capital accumulation: although it is by no means sufficient to justify one in speaking about capitalism having reached a "new stage". This is the greatly increased importance of the accumulated reserves of the big corporations (corporate internal accumulation) which makes possible "internal financing" of a very high proportion of investment expenditure, without resort to the banks or to the capital market. As one might expect, the tendency is most pronounced in the U.S.A.; and one estimate, made by the economists of the National City Bank, is that, of the $150 billion of investment in modernising and enlarging plant and equipment in U.S.A. from 1946 to 1953 inclusive, as much as 64 per cent came from internal sources—*i.e.* from "receipts of the enterprises which had been accumulated and not distributed as dividends".[3] Although less developed in this country

[1] *New Fabian Essays*, p. 39.

[2] In the *Marxist Quarterly*, January 1957, p. 4.

[3] Adolf A. Berle Jnr., *The Twentieth-Century Capitalist Revolution*, pp. 25-6. Of the remaining 36 per cent of the total, one-half was raised by current borrowing, chiefly from banks, and the other half (no more than 18 per cent of the total) by issue of bonds or shares on the capital market.

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than in America, this has become an important, if not major, factor in the investment activity of private industry (as is pointed out in the Labour Party's *Industry and Society*), and the growth of accumulated reserves of private companies to several times their previous size has been a striking feature of the post-war financial situation. For example, in recent years undistributed profits after tax have amounted to about a half of the gross trading profits of companies operating in the U.K. and represented a larger sum than "fixed investment at home" plus "increase in value of stocks".[1]

Now it does not at all follow that investment out of those accumulated reserves is a managerially sponsored enterprise uninfluenced by capitalist profit-motives. Nor does it necessarily follow that because they have built up these reserves big business will invest them in additions to real capital.[2] But their existence is likely to represent a strong pressure to invest in re-equipment and extension—a pressure increasing with their size. For this reason I think one can take it as being substantially true that such internal accumulation itself *breeds* investment (in the economists' sense). This, if true, has two main consequences.

Firstly, it will tend to encourage the expansion of the large monopolistic concerns, and hence accelerate the process of concentration. Secondly, it may give to a boom a greater momentum than it previously had, causing it to perpetuate itself for longer in face of minor obstacles until arrested by some major shock (by which I mean a shock to the profit-expectations on which the boom was built, whatever form this shock may take). This momentum is because high boom-profits cause swollen internal accumulation, and such accumulation gives an impetus to further investment which tends to sustain the boom: while at the same time the existence of such reserves means that the large monopoly concerns owning them have become virtually their own investment bankers and their investment policies are to this extent immune to the usual financial limits (state of the capital market, restrictions on bank-credit etc.).

This by no means implies that monopoly capitalism has thereby grown immune to the traditional profit-incentives governing investment, still less to the normal crisis-tendencies inherent in the anarchy of capitalist production and the tendency of productive capacity to outrun demand. But it may mean that the investment policy of capitalist industry (at least of the large concerns) is more influenced than formerly by long-term considerations and less affected by short-term changes in profit expectations. Thus it may serve somewhat to "distort" the normal course of the cycle of trade and productive activity by elongating the boom-phase, and hence serve as a *contributory* factor, at least, in explaining the surprising prolongation of the post-war boom in the capitalist world (*e.g.* it may help to explain it *in conjunction* with a factor in the situation that I shall mention later). One may note in passing that if it helps to elongate the boom phase it may also contribute to making the crisis and depression phase, when this comes, all the sharper and/or more prolonged; but that is another story.

To my mind it is this prolongation of the post-war boom for twelve years (broken only by minor recessions in 1948-9 and in 1952 in this country—1953-4 in the U.S.A.) that we essentially need to explain; and it is accordingly around this question that my remarks in the remainder of this article will be centred. In explaining what has occurred over the past twelve years the size of Government expenditures, including armament expenditure, is evidently of very great importance. In the period of the Korean War it was no doubt the dominant influence. So also in the early post-war years the influence of pent-up demand resulting from war-time shortages, absence of repairs and wholesale destruction was an important one. In the article already mentioned I suggested reasons for thinking, however, that the level of Government expenditures cannot provide the whole of the explanation (perhaps even not the major part of it). As for the so-called pent-up demand arising out of war-time conditions and war-time devastation, this must have played a rapidly diminishing role in sustaining industrial activity in the course of the nineteen-fifties. What needs explaining, particularly over the last three or four years (i.e. since the recovery from the American recession of 1953-4), is the persistent boom of *private* investment (i.e. investment by private industry in modernisation and extension of capacity) alike in this country, in West Germany

[1] *Economic Survey 1957* (H.M.S.O.), p. 24.

[2] They may use these reserves to buy up *existing* assets or even hold Government bonds with them (temporarily at any rate). But the capitalist class as a *whole* cannot go on buying up existing assets—although the monopoly capitalists may buy them from other capitalists, thus concentrating ownership in the hands of the former, but in the process transferring money-balances into the hands of the latter. And any large-scale purchase of bonds by companies (holding their reserves in this form) will tend to raise their price and depress bond-yields, thus making them an unremunerative form of asset-holding—unless this happens to coincide with large new issues of bonds by the Government.

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and in North America, in face of a "tapering-off" of previously mounting armament expenditures and in face of rising interest rates and credit stringency. This fact is the more remarkable and cries out the more insistently for explanation, since all that we learned both from theory and from experience in the inter-war period leads us to expect from monopoly capitalism, the more it develops, a mounting degree of excess capacity of plant and equipment and a tendency to stagnation in investment and rate of growth.[1]

A Period of Technical Innovation

Any Marxist analysis would be incomplete without an examination of changes in technique and in the productive forces. Indeed, one could say that this should be the starting point of any analysis, since the productive forces are (in Stalin's well known phrase) the "most mobile element" in the mode of production. To this, accordingly, I want now to turn, with special reference to the problem just stated at the end of the last paragraph.

About the time of the First World War there occurred a series of changes in productive techniques to which the label of "mass production" has been loosely attached. In such changes American industry, then in an expanding phase, took the lead; and after the war and in the course of the twenties British industry (at least, some branches of it) followed rather slowly and inadequately in its wake. With such changes were evidently connected the large increases in labour productivity that were characteristic of American industry in the 1920s (leading to current talk about "technological unemployment") and also the smaller, but none the less significant, rises in British productivity in the middle and late twenties and also (curiously enough) in the thirties. "Mass production" was associated with the increasing use of electricity as a motive-power, and was connected (at least indirectly) with the rise of the new industries of the inter-war period, such as electrical engineering, plastics, motors and aircraft, and with crucial developments in the chemical industry.

I think that economic historians of the future may well look back on this as a threshold-stage of the "automation" of the 1950s. Originating (it would seem) in the movement towards increased standardisation both of productive equipment and of products, it developed into a serialisation of machines and processes so as to reduce handling by human beings to a minimum and to enable successive stages in production to be arranged along a moving assembly-belt or conveyor. But although handling was reduced to a minimum, the worker continued to exercise detailed control and to perform himself most of the productive operations (e.g. on a motor-car assembly line). It was a logical, but revolutionary, next step beyond this for automation to transfer even detailed control over productive operations to the machine, by utilising modern advances in electronics (some of them war-time products) to provide complex "feed-back" mechanisms.

To quote the authority of Dr. Lilley:

> "It is only in the post-war period—and largely as a result of technical advances initiated during the war—that it has become possible to apply automation to technical processes in general. And so, despite a pre-history that goes back a generation or more, automation as something of general solid significance belongs to the last five or ten years—and even more to the future. Its effects are most noticeable in two main fields, which were nearly unaffected before 1945—in engineering production and in clerical work."[2]

This is not the place to enter upon a full-dress discussion of the probable economic effects of automation — e.g. effects on different strata of the working class (possible narrowing of the sphere of the semi-skilled machine-operator as well as of the older type of skilled craftsman, in favour of maintenance staff, machine-setters, technician-supervisers of machines and the like), upon methods of wage-payment (reversion to time-rates), on multiple shift round-the-clock working, and upon the ratio of capital-costs to wage-costs (the Marxian "composition of capital" in *value* terms). In a work of my own, published just after the war,[3] I made a tentative (and no doubt inadequate) attempt to analyse some of the potential effects of the new technical methods of the earlier pre-automation phase of innovation, two of which may have some relevance in our present context: namely, their tendency to make output rigid in face of changes in demand, and to cause technical innovation to take the form of revolutionary "jumps" (involving, as it increasingly tends to do, large-scale scrapping and dismantling and rebuilding of complex industrial units), instead of the gradual bit-by-bit process of innovation of nineteenth century capitalism. What I think can hardly be denied is that we have been living in a period of quite revolutionary technical change, in which the productive forces have been undergoing a fairly crucial transformation, or a qualitative "leap". If this is so, it can hardly be

[1] See, for example, J. Steindl, *Maturity and Stagnation in American Capitalism*.

[2] S. Lilley, *Automation and Social Progress*, p. 15.

[3] *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, pp. 358-370.

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without some fairly profound effects upon the productive relations and the general functioning of capitalism. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to connect these changes in the productive forces (if indirectly) with those accelerated tendencies to state monopoly capitalism of which we have spoken.

Hitherto, in discussing automation, we have tended to focus attention on its labour-displacing effect—its eventual tendency to swell once again the industrial reserve army on a bigger scale than the "technological unemployment" so much talked of in the twenties. This will no doubt be an important feature of these changes in the long-term perspective; just as large increases in productive capacity will be the eventual result of the investment boom of recent years. What, however, we have tended to overlook, in focusing attention on these longer-term results, is that an important *immediate* effect of technological innovation may be to give a boost to investment, and hence keep the boom level of activity going (with its inflationary pressures and full employment) by increasing the demand for capital goods of all kinds, constructional materials, steel etc. (products of Marx's Department I). What I am suggesting is that the investment possibilities afforded by this technical revolution may provide the explanation that we are seeking for the surprising persistence of the investment boom since the end of the Korean War.

Technical Change and Investment Boom

There may be two reasons why this rather obvious explanation has not been seized upon before, and why some may still be inclined to reject it. Firstly, we usually associate monopoly capitalism with restriction of output and even sabotage of technical progress, and it seems to go against the grain to suggest that the mere existence of technical possibilities for innovation can be a reason for such innovation being put into effect. "Fear of productive capacity" is an ever-present anxiety of monopoly capitalism and monopolies have shown that they have the power to obstruct and retard development. What we have to remember, however, is that (as Lenin insisted) monopoly does not supersede and exclude competition *between* monopolies, but only changes its form; and this very rivalry may well compel businesses to undertake innovations, if anarchically and unevenly, once it has become clear that someone will start setting the pace. And if our earlier proposition be true, that the existence of large accumulated reserves exerts a pressure to find investment outlets, it may not be at all surprising that a period of technical discovery should be a period of relatively high investment.

The second possible reason is a more theoretical one. Hitherto we have tended (as pointed out by John Eaton in the last number) to give to the theory of crisis a somewhat crude under-consumption twist; and in talking of the tendency of productive capacity to outrun consuming power, to identify consuming power with *personal* consumption (V + the consumed part of S, in Marx's notation). The same bias is unfortunately to be found in the section on crisis-theory in the new Soviet *Political Economy Textbook*.[1] This is to concentrate attention exclusively upon the market for Department II (producing consumer goods), and to ignore the fact that investment *while it is occurring* creates a market for the products of Department I (capital goods—machines, building materials etc.), and by enlarging employment and profits in this sector may have the further effect of enlarging the market for Department II as well. True, the products of Department I that this investment is calling forth, unless they are all devoted to the expansion of Department I itself must eventually result in an enlargement of productive capacity in the consumer goods industries and hence pile up a problem of over-production in that sector, unless personal consumption (V + consumed part of S) is equivalently increased. But that is a longer-term problem, and we are talking now of the more immediate, short-term effect of investment while it is occurring.

Lenin on "Productive Consumption"

In this connection it is worth quoting Lenin's argument against the Narodniks in the first chapter of his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, now available in English for the first time. Lenin here stresses that demand for commodities must *not* be identified with personal consumption; that there is also what is termed *productive consumption*, representing demand for capital goods, products of Department I, and arising from expenditure by capitalist firms on machinery, buildings, raw materials and components etc. Moreover, the latter can and does increase *faster* than the former; and to this extent productive consumption (= investment) is "independent" of personal consumption, even if this be a limited form of "independence". While this "independence" must not be exaggerated, it does mean that investment and hence the productive activity of Department I are not *limited* by personal consumption (V + consumed part of S) in the sense of having to keep in step with it: indeed, Lenin stressed, it is a basic characteristic of capitalism

[1] See especially p. 263 of the English translation of the second edition.

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that Department I tends to grow faster than Department II.

> "Thus the growth of the home market for capitalism is, to a certain extent 'independent' of the growth of personal consumption, taking place in greater measure on account of productive consumption . . . The development of production chiefly on account of means of production seems paradoxical and undoubtedly constitutes a contradiction. It is real 'production for production's sake'—the expansion of production without a corresponding expansion of consumption. But it is a contradiction, not of doctrine, but of actual life . . . [and] corresponds to the very nature of capitalism."[1]

The same idea, it may be noted, is expressed even more sharply in his booklet, *A Characterisation of Economic Romanticism* (pp. 62-4), in the passage cited by John Eaton in the last number of *Marxism Today*.

To summarise: what I am suggesting is that a period of abnormal technological innovation, by opening up a whole new sphere of investment for accumulated capital (for a time) and hence an expanding demand for products of Department I, may constitute just such an expansion of "the home market" as Lenin was speaking of. When this is combined with the high level of Government spending and the internal accumulation of funds by large companies of which we have spoken, this seems capable of explaining well enough what has been happening during the present decade. In the quite exceptional technological situation of the mid-twentieth century, it should not be at all surprising to Marxists (granted that their theory is a fully rounded one) if the normal course of the cycle is somewhat distorted, in the sense of being replaced by a longer cycle having a more prolonged upward phase, as compared with the nineteenth-century type of cycle on which our thinking has previously been based.

But to say this is *not* to say, of course, that the upward phase can go on indefinitely, as some neo-Fabians would like to have it, converting a novel "phase" (which I think we have to recognise it as being) into a quite new "stage". Nor does it mean that contradictions have been surmounted —merely that for the time being they have changed their form of expression (there are plenty of contradictions in an inflationary situation and phase, as we can now see—but we have not hitherto given enough attention, perhaps, to analysing them). At the time of writing there are signs that the American investment boom is "flattening out" at least; and in this country the drastic deflationary measures of September seem likely to cause investment to turn downward. Whether this down-turn will prove only temporary or permanent and cumulative, the facts of the coming months alone can tell. It would be wrong to deduce an answer from *a priori* reasoning, and misleading to rely too much on analogies with past situations—much as one is tempted to see parallels between some recent events and 1929.

[1] *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, English edition 1957, pp. 32, 33-4.

On Dogmatism and Revisionism

Wladyslaw Gomulka

(Extracts from his report "Key Problems of Party Policy" given at the 9th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, on May 15th, 1957.)

Unity of the Party and the Principles of Democratic Centralism

THE strength of the Party is made up of many elements. The first essential condition of the strength of the Party is unity in its ranks. The Party can only fulfil its great and difficult tasks, lead the working class and the masses of the people, and guide socialist construction, when it is inspired by one will and one aim, when its ranks are disciplined and closely knit. The necessity for the unity of the Party becomes greater the greater the difficulties that face it in its day to day activity.

The unity of the Party cannot be a mechanical, blind unity, based on obedience in carrying out orders. Such mechanical unity would not bind the members of the Party into a united Party organisation, would not represent the strength of the Party, but rather its weakness. Such unity resembles the unity of a heap of sand. The unity of the Party must be a conscious unity, must stem from the will, convic-

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tions and single aim of all its members. The strength of the Party lies in its ideological unity, in the conviction of its members that they understand the correctness of the need to apply general laws and principles in the Party's struggle for the transition of the nation from capitalism to socialism.

Unity of the Party must be based on the principles of democratic centralism. This is a most important condition of the strength of the Party. The Marxist-Leninist Party is a democratic Party, that is a Party whose organisation and internal life are based on the principles of democratic centralism. Its main feature is the subordination of the minority to the decisions and the will of the majority of the Party members, for only in this way can the unity of action of the Party be ensured.

The unity of the Party pre-supposes the election of all its leading bodies and committees in a democratic way. There is also full freedom of speech within the Party. Every member of the Party can express his opinion on Party matters, can express his views on the policy of the Party, on its practical activity, has the right to criticise its activity, as well as to criticise various weaknesses and shortcomings in the work of the Party leadership or the Party apparatus.

The criticism and discussion carried out by the members of the Party must be of a creative character, and should aim to make the work of the Party more efficient, to increase its strength. A member of the Party has not, however, the right to put forward outside the Party any views which he holds which are not in accordance with the attitude of the majority of the Party, with the policy of the Party laid down by the appropriate Party committee. To go against this principle is to weaken the unity of the Party, and is contrary to democratic centralism. If a member of the Party does not agree with the policy of the Party, if he does not wish to subordinate his views to the will of the majority of the Party on fundamental matters, if his views make it difficult for him to accept the ideological principles of the Party, then he should leave its ranks and hand in his Party card, or the Party should remove him from its ranks. This is essential in order to maintain that unity and cohesion which is the basis of the Party's strength.

This is how things should be, how they should be following the spirit and the letter of the resolution of our Eighth Plenum. But what is the real situation within our Party?

The unity, and, therefore, the strength of our Party have been seriously weakened as a result of the breaking of the basic principles of the foundation of a sound, conscious unity of the Party. In particular, the principles of democratic centralism and the Leninist norms of Party life have not been observed in our Party. We spoke about those in general at the Eighth Plenum. The violation of Leninist principles of the unity of the Party went hand in hand with important errors in the policy of the Party which, taken in conjunction with external events caused a political crisis within the Party. The expression of this crisis was the mistrust felt by the Party organisations towards the leadership of the Party; there was ideological confusion in the Party; various opposing groups appeared within the Party; and all this added up to a breaking up of the unity of the Party.

Such a situation existed in the Party already for a long time before the 8th Plenum. It became apparent that the Party was incapable of fulfilling its role as the leader of the working class and the working people for it could not maintain its own unity.

The resolutions of the 8th Plenum arose from the need to overcome the critical situation which had been developing for some time within the Party and the country. This situation was caused by internal as well as external events. There is no doubt that the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the exposure of the cult of the individual, greatly influenced our situation. It could not have been otherwise. For we are part of the international working class movement. Anything that happens in this movement cannot be without its effect on us, and anything that happens here cannot fail to have an influence on the international working class movement.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU came as a serious shock to the international working class movement, particularly to the Workers' and to the Communist Parties which lead this movement. That shock was necessary, it can even be said that it was essential. For it destroyed those elements in the policy of the Workers' and Communist Parties which weakened their forces, which separated the Party from the masses and counterposed it to the masses.

The shock caused by the exposure of the cult of the individual at the 20th Congress of the CPSU was even greater here owing to the Poznan incidents, which had sharpened the crisis within the Party.

Then came our 7th Plenum but this, despite the fundamentally correct resolutions adopted, did not succeed in improving the situation. The hidden struggles within our Central Party bodies continued to break asunder the unity of the Party leadership. And without unity in the leadership the whole Party is incapable of action. But in the conditions which had arisen there was no way out of the political crisis other than through internal struggle. For the forces in this struggle were the forces of the rebirth of the Party, forces which were not uniform, which did not have a well defined programme of action, but which felt the need and the necessity for a rebirth of the Party, for changes in its policy, and which were fighting against the conservative ossification in the Party and its exponents, sometimes real and

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sometimes imaginary. The view that conservatism in the Party had had numerous and very active defenders was a wrong one. Conservatism showed itself above all in the inertia of the Party, in its helplessness, in the inactivity and passivity of its codes, in the fear of all that was new and unknown, in the desire to retain the old ways whilst realising that this was impossible, in the loss of perspective, and in not being able to see any possible way out of the situation. It was above all in this that the conservatism in the Party was exposed.

It was only the 8th Plenum that brought the fundamental turn, that led the Party on to the road out of the crisis. The Political Bureau (reorganised by the 8th Plenum), that daily executive organ of the Central Committee of the Party, is already working in a united way. This is a great success for the Party. The Party is gradually beginning to shake off its stagnation but the effects of the recent crisis in the Party have not disappeared all at once. The Party is still weak, like a convalescent after a serious illness. This weakness makes it difficult for the Party to reap the benefits, fully to utilise for its own good, for the good of socialism, internationalism and the strengthening of Polish-Soviet friendship, the great fundamental achievements of the 8th Plenum, which were expressed in the Polish-Soviet statement of November 18th.

This long period of weakness of the Party revived the activity of the reactionary forces, which opened up a broad offensive against it, sometimes under the cover of the slogans of the 8th Plenum. During the October days and after, various reactionary elements, petty bourgeois or trouble makers, taking advantage of the criticism and self-criticism conducted by the Party before the whole nation, began a concerted attack against hundreds and thousands of the most active members of the Party. The lack of appropriate counter-action by the Party, the fact that the Party did not defend its honest and active members, who had been publicly attacked by these elements under the crooked slogan of struggle against the "Stalinists", discouraged the Party leaders from a broader activity, thus lengthening the period of weakness within the Party.

The election campaign for the Seym (Parliament) showed that the Party, although still weak, was yet able to carry through great campaigns by organisational effort. The election victory, attained under conditions of complete freedom, strengthened the Party internally, raised its political morale, and, at the same time, proved that the Party was capable of carrying the nation with it, that, where important State questions and the fate of People's Poland were at stake, the nation followed the voice of the Party.

From the 8th Plenum until today, the Party has not yet succeeded in achieving complete unity within its ranks. The results of the previous period are revealed in the ideological confusion of some members of the Party, in the proclamation of various false theories, in revisionist tendencies, in tendencies to deny democratic centralism as the organisational basis of the Party. All this has made it difficult for the Party to unite its ranks, has undermined the cohesion of the Party, weakened its ability to act, and brought uncertainty and confusion to the ranks of the Party.

The unity of the Party does not at all assume the absolute unanimity of all its members, of all Communists. Such absolute unanimity has never existed, does not exist and will never exist, for it cannot exist. The monolithic character of the Party does not depend upon all its members holding absolutely the same views on all matters coming within the sphere of Party activity. Such a sham unanimity can only be created in an artificial manner, in a theatrical manner, with the use of methods which have nothing in common with stage production. There can be no absolute unanimity of all Party members because the Party is a living organism, developing with the whole of life, which is constantly undergoing changes. In order not to become petrified the Party must keep pace with life, must keep pace with its changes; its task is to mould the development of life. The Party must march at the head of life, it must keep on marching forward.

In order to be such a living organism the Party must develop its ideas, must see in Marxism-Leninism only a direction, a signpost for its activity, and not a collection of ossified dogmas. The development of Marxist-Leninist ideas can take place only by means of discussion, through an exchange of views between Party members. Discussion and controversy with a view to finding better forms of activity for the Party, better methods of transition from capitalism to socialism, should always have their outcome in resolutions by the Party bodies concerned. Settled controversial problems once resolved are either included in the programme of Party activity, in the Party's political line and then become binding on the entire Party, on all its members, or they are rejected and then discussion on these problems must stop.

The practice of Party life and activity can throw up new controversial problems, or, after a certain time, it may turn out that previously rejected controversial ideas should now be accepted, either because a new situation has arisen, or because their previous rejection has proved to be wrong. However, the procedure in dealing with controversial questions is always the same—they are resolved by the Party through its Party bodies.

This is the essence of democratic centralism which pre-supposes the free discussion within the Party, and at the same time guarantees the monolithic character of Party activity. Only the simultaneous

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observance of these two principles guarantees the vitality and unity of the Party, and at the same time safeguards it against petrification and disunity.

When I say that from the 8th Plenum until today the Party has not yet managed completely to re-establish the unity of its ranks, I have in mind the activity of those Party members who take full advantage of their right to propagate their views and at the same time do not show the least desire to subordinate themselves to the Party, which, through its leading committees, through the 8th Plenum, and through its organisational principles, has rejected their views and recognised them as false and harmful. The Party cannot take from its fundamental organisational principle—democratic centralism—just one part of this principle, democracy, and reject the other part, centralism. For this would undermine the whole principle. And yet precisely such is the conduct of those Party members who have gone astray ideologically, who have lost Marxism-Leninism, who have lost socialism, in their search for new roads to Socialism. Among them are also people to whom Socialism has become alien, and who are quite clearly expressing their longing for capitalism.

Revisionism Disarms the Party and the Working Class in their Struggle for Socialism

It is impossible to enumerate here all the revisionist concepts publicly proclaimed in the press and various periodicals, mainly non-Party ones. To illustrate the principal trend of thinking of all revisionists, I shall quote statements by one of them, namely a Party member, Comrade L. Kolakowski, who in *Zycie Warszawy*, wrote thus on February 3rd, 1957:

> "Every new phase of the socialist movement began with theoretical activity. Such activity, with the aim of discovering the main trends of development of modern societies . . . . both capitalist and non-capitalist, we consider to be a necessary condition to reveal to us the horizon of a new and different socialism".

This quotation shows that the author is not concerned with the need to develop the theory of Marxism-Leninism, an aim which could only be applauded. The author starts from the absurd premise, that the present day socialist movement has no theoretical foundation whatsoever. The classics of Marxism no longer exist for him. He wants to begin now to discover the main trends of development of capitalist societies, and, he says, also of non-capitalist societies.

What this last expression means he does not explain. Obviously he has in mind societies constructing socialism, but fails to find another definition of their social system. He doesn't want to call them a socialist system, and therefore has found a new terminology—a non-capitalist system. The question arises: what system? The revisionists cannot find an answer to this question, and therefore affirm that only a new theory will show the horizons of a new and different Socialism. How this new Socialism is to come about, what it will be like, is not known. For this new theory does not yet exist.

The author is probably conscious of the fact that the scientific difficulties of elaborating a political and economic programme of a new Socialism, unknown to anyone, are insurmountable. Such a programme, if not to be a Utopia, would have to reflect the reality of life. For every scientific theory arises from life, and must be in keeping with life, if it is to constitute a signpost to its development. But the life of societies is not an indetermined life, it is always a concrete life. This is why the theory of scientific Socialism cannot be just a general theory, but must always be a concrete theory, arising from concrete life. Only then can it serve as a scientific instrument in the hands of those who change its social forms. If the theory does not correspond to these conditions, it is not a theory, but a Utopia.

The unsurmounted scientific difficulties involved in the elaboration at the present time of a new political and economic programme, unknown to us and just as unknown to Kolakowski, of a new Socialism, do not arise from the fact that wise men have not yet been born capable of elaborating such a programme. The impossibility of elaborating such a programme arises from the fact that the present life and world have not so far created a concrete social, economic, political and cultural background for the emergence of such a theory. When the conditions of life change, when life matures and enters a different phase of development from the present one, then there will also certainly be people capable of elaborating new theories in keeping with this life and fostering its further development.

As we see it, theory is a rather difficult business and, therefore, Comrade Kolakowski does not want to cope with it. He abandons the field of theory and passes to the field of practice. He says: "It is difficult to wait for the time when the political and economic programme of the Socialist movement, expanded and based on scientific premises will grow to its full stature", and therefore, leaving aside the scientific basis, he puts forward an incomplete programme which must be implemented at once. There is no need to quote in full this programme, for its essence is contained in the following formulations:

> ". . . . to oppose Socialist democracy to bourgeois democracy is harmful nonsense, what matters is not to liquidate the achievements of bourgeois democracy, but to broaden them through a system which would remove elements of fictitiousness which arise from social inequality."

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". . . . democracy is a risk but a risk worth taking."

". . . . the Party degenerates if it is fused with the State apparatus and becomes in practice a component part thereof—instead of being a social inspirer and educator."

The question arises: why did Kolakowski need this short remark about the necessity to elaborate a new theory of a new Socialism? Probably only in order to cover with it, as with a fig leaf, the bourgeois and social democratic theories from which he deduced his programme of socialist construction in Poland. And not only *his* programme, for it is to be the programme of the so-called, God help us, Party left and at least of a part of this political conglomeration, of this mixture of sometimes good but ideologically confused comrades, together with people who in fact have already abandoned socialism and have already nothing in common with it except their Party card, which they have not turned in and which the Party has so far failed to withdraw from them.

It is indeed hard to understand how a man who considers himself a Party member, a Communist, can be so far detached from this earth, from life, from our present day Polish reality and from the reality of the present day world.

What does Kolakowski want? He wants a so-called integral democracy. Mention of this has already been made in this report. It is the reality of life, reality, and not nonsense, as Kolakowski claims, to oppose socialist democracy to bourgeois democracy. Integral democracy is nonsense in the conditions of every class society.

Lenin said: "The living soul of Marxism resides in a concrete analysis of a concrete situation." If one should ask Comrade Kolakowski privately whether in our concrete situation the appearance of bourgeois parties on the political scene, which he is in fact demanding, would entail a threat of the restitution of capitalism, and in connection with this of a civil war with all its consequences, he would certainly not reply in the negative. True, he is stating publicly that this would only be a risk, but it is difficult to accuse him of such far reaching ignorance of reality. If one should ask him next whether in the present concrete international situation when imperialism, together with the whole of world reaction, is mobilising the forces of war against the countries of the socialist camp, whether such a free interplay of political forces in our country as he recommends would serve the interests of imperialism and reaction, he certainly would not hesitate to reply in the affirmative. But perhaps he supposes that this would strengthen our Western frontiers? The chances are that he did not even think of these when he drafted his programme. For one may risk one's own few zlotys in a lottery, but no responsible Pole would stake the fate of Poland, the fate of our nation, even in a lottery which is called integral democracy, or, in the words of the most recent Polish variant, the free interplay of political forces.

Kolakowski's programme also contains the thought that only in conditions of integral democracy can society attain a high level of political consciousness. It is difficult to formulate a judgment on this. For there never was and there never can be such a democracy anywhere. But there was once upon a time a broad bourgeois democracy in the German Weimar Republic. It was precisely in this broad bourgeois democracy, on the basis of which Kolakowski desires to broaden socialist democracy, that the German public attained such a high political level that it produced a Hitler and the racial theory of the superiority of the German race.

From the thesis that only a broad democracy enables each society to attain a high political level, it would seem to follow that the majority of the nations which have abolished capitalism and entered the road of Socialism are characterised by a low level of political consciousness. For they had no stage of bourgeois democracy in their history. Thinking logically, on the basis of this thesis, the absurd conclusion is reached that a low political level of society is propitious for socialist revolution. Thus, politically ignorant people are the ones to effect the social transformation of the world. It would follow from this that the Communists should be ardent partisans of social ignorance.

Comrade Kolakowski probably forgot that the political consciousness of the man who has had his fill is different from that of the man who is hungry, that it is different for those who exploit and those who are exploited. One cannot compare incomparable things. Speaking of low and high levels of political consciousness, only such a political consciousness should be deemed high which changes social relations between peoples from worse to better. This is being accomplished by the nations which are building a socialist system in their countries, a system which will be tomorrow a system of the entire world.

Comrade Kolakowski also rejects the Leninist doctrine of the role of the Party, and of its decisive importance in the process of passing from capitalism to Socialism.

The Party, says Comrade Kolakowski, is only to be "a social inspirer and educator . . . . ." that is, something like a Rosary society. It should not organise the masses and lead them in practical action, it should not make decisions; practically speaking, it is not responsible for anything. Everything is happening by itself, outside the Party, spontaneously. To complete the picture of this happy Utopia, the Party is also freed from the responsibility for State power.

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For if the Party constitutes a component part of State power it "degenerates", as he puts it. Who is to be part of State power remains unknown. This is unimportant, however, for everything is ruled by the elements and their anarchistic laws.

Such is the programme elaborated by Comrade Kolakowski for the Party "left". It seems that not the whole "left" deemed it possible to accept this programme, for Comrade Kolakowski sadly remarks in his later essay on the Party left:

> "The main weakness of the left did not reside in the fact that it arose from negation, but in the fact that this negation reached the level of moral protest and not the level of practical thinking. A left wing trend which halts at the stage of moral experiences is not very effective in practice. A hangover is not a political stand."

For this revisionist hangover Comrade Kolakowski was commended by the bourgeois and Trotskyite press which published in their columns his articles which the censorship did not allow to be printed in Poland. Lack of time does not allow us to estimate the value of the statements made by other revisionists in our Party, like Zimand and Woroszylski. It is not even necessary. All revisionists' theories resemble one another, for they all arise from the same root—from bourgeois ideology, under the influence of which social democratic ideology is shaped.

Revisionism is not a new phenomena in the working class movement. It is as old as the working class movement itself. But although revisionism does not die it never has a long life in the revolutionary working class movement. This movement is characterised by the fact that it always throws overboard all revisionist views and theories. This is why it grows and can develop. Revisionism within its ranks would spell death. For what is revisionism?

In the international working class movement the expression revisionism is used with regard to false views on social reality. The Marxist analysis of society has led to the discovery of the objective laws governing social development. Such objective laws include, for example, the existence of classes and the class struggle in society, and the need for planning in socialist economy. The party of the working class, armed with the Marxist theory of social development, derives its political line from this theory and from these laws of social development.

In the course of work on the theoretical analysis of the processes of social development, there were people within the working class parties who questioned certain fundamental principles of Marxist theory. For example, they began to affirm that socialism can be built without the class struggle. Such a thesis is false and this is confirmed by life. These false views have been called revisionism in the working class movement. Revisionism consists in the denial of the laws of social development discovered by the classics of Marxism.

Revisionists usually have recourse to the argument that if Marxism is a science, it must, like every other science be subject to revision. For science is infinite and will live as long as mankind itself. Such a statement is in keeping with the truth. Marxism, like every other science, is subject to revision because it develops together with life. Lenin revised, or in other words, developed Marxism and no-one has called Lenin a revisionist. The 20th Congress of the CPSU revised certain principles of Marxism-Leninism when it put forth the possibility, but only a possibility, *i.e.* it did not yet assume the existence of a permanent law in this field, of the seizure of power by the working class without bloodshed, for example, through Parliament, and also put forward the possibility, but only the possibility, of avoiding war. But no-one says that the 20th Congress of the CPSU shared revisionist tendencies. For the introduction into the science of Marxism of additions reflecting living reality or changed life does not constitute revisionism. But it is revisionism to introduce new theoretical principles to the science of Marxist principles which do not correspond with the possibilities of shaping life in accordance with the aims contained in them, that is, which are not in keeping with the laws governing social development. In the working class movement and its theory, the word "revisionism" has always had but one meaning. Revisionism means the distortion of Marxism through the introduction of erroneous and false theses to its teachings, theses which do not correctly reflect social reality.

Marxist ideology stems from the science of Marxism-Leninism as well as from the experience of the working class in their struggles for socialism of certain principles, certain laws, which it is necessary to apply in order to transform social relations. The revisionists attack precisely these principles. They do not recognise the leading role of the Party; they do not recognise democratic centralism; they question the essence of the class struggle etc. It is not true that all the present ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism will, at every stage of the historical development of mankind, remain unchanged. When the class forces of the bourgeoisie are no longer capable of barring the way to the socialist system, then it will be perfectly possible, to conceive for example, of having freedom for all political trends in the Party and in society. These political trends will not then be able to turn against Socialism, for they will lack a suitable class basis in society. But today's reality is different. Both in our country and in the world, the class struggle is still being waged. In this struggle, the working class must be well armed ideologically in order to triumph. And the ideology of revisionism is the ideology of the flight from the

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struggle which is being waged, an ideology of capitulation before the difficulties of socialist construction, an ideology of capitulation before the class enemy. Revisionism is a trend of capitulation, well known under various forms in the history of the working class, a trend towards the revision of Marxism against the requirements of life and of the struggle.

Revisionism is thus an assembly of erroneous and false views, which boils down in its essence to denying the objective laws of social development confirmed by life, to denying or undermining the fundamental experiences of the revolutionary working class movement, applied generally at a given stage of historical development.

In the present situation the unity of the Party is the most important pre-requisite for its strength. Revisionism undermines the unity of the Party, sows disbelief amongst the ranks of the Party and the working class in the correctness of the policy of the Party. It disarms the Party and the working class in their struggle for socialism. Revisionism is a hindrance to social development. In our conditions, the eyes and thoughts of a revisionist are, in fact, turned backwards. They aim at a return to the past under the pretext that they are paving the way for the future.

Dogmatism and Conservatism separate the Party from the People

The Party cannot agree to the establishment of any factions within its ranks, regardless of what they are called. It would be political nonsense to divide the Party into a left, centre and right. Such absurd talk only expresses the efforts to organise groups, that is factions, within the Party. The Party must be united if it is to be capable of fulfilling its historic role. The Party as a whole is the vanguard of the social left. Each group within the Party, irrespective of the tag which it chooses, is neither the left, nor the right, nor the centre, but a breeding ground of Party weakness. And a weak Party makes the enemy strong. That is why everything which weakens the Party weakens the social left, and from this point of view is backward, no matter how much people might wish to call it progressive and left wing.

It is desirable that all Party members should be conscious of their activity. The Party must be united; it must with determination get rid of everything that undermines its strength. It is high time definitely to end the old period that preceded the 8th Plenum, the period of groups and inner-Party strife. The Party must act as a united whole, must advance with closed ranks, for only then can it most successfully fulfil its great tasks.

It is not only revisionism that makes the Party defenceless in the face of the class enemy. Dogmatism and conservatism have the same effect although in a different way. These two notions should be clearly distinguished for if such a distinction is not made many mistakes can be made.

In Party terminology, dogmatism means a certain collection of ossified notions which once arose under specific historical conditions, and now are not changing, though life has gone forward. These notions are maintained irrespective of whether they are correct or not, whether they are adapted to life or not, whether they facilitate its development or not. A dogmatically thinking member of the Party would like to adapt life to his way of thinking, so as to keep things as they are, not to change in any way, not to break any principles which he regards as Marxist-Leninist principles. But life cannot be adapted by non-living principles.

All efforts in this direction do not remain unpunished. We know this from experience. Dogmatism is an enemy of Marxism, for it places various obstacles in the way of its development.

Dogmatism in thought, that is ideological dogmatism, in practice, transforms itself into sectarianism. The dogmatist cannot implant his ideas, his views, amongst the broad masses, for they think differently.

Dogmatists, even those who are most politically active, cannot find a common language with the people, they remain a closed-in sect, politically isolated from the people, for they carry out a narrow, sectarian policy which cannot be accepted by the people. The dogmatists will always be ready to quote correct Marxist principles, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leading role of the Party, the worker-peasant alliance, but in spite of this, these correct principles, in his mouth, become empty phrases, empty sounds. For with his dogmatic way of thinking he is not capable of fulfilling these principles.

There are not many of these ideological dogmatists in the ranks of our Party. But even a small group of persons thinking dogmatically can cause confusion in the Party ranks. In spite of this, in the real conditions of our Party, ideological dogmatists are not dangerous for the Party. What is dangerous for the Party is the inability of the Party activists to apply political methods of work, their inability which is burdened by old habits and customs, in other words, by what is called conservatism.

The dogmatist is by the nature of things a conservative. However, conservatism in the ranks of our Party arise not so much from the ideological sources of dogmatism as from inability to work in a new way, from a lack of understanding of the essence of the resolutions of the 8th Plenum, and, above all, from insufficient training of the political activists in new methods of work.

Today, not only those comrades who question the correctness of the decisions of the 8th Plenum, in other words, those whom I call ideological

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dogmatists, are conservatives in their practical activity. There are very few of these latter. A considerable number are Party activists of whom the great majority completely agree with the resolutions of the 8th Plenum and the general lines of Party policy which arise from them, but still do not know how to work in the new way. Not knowing how to work in the new way, these comrades become passive and avoid Party work. They will act in this way until they can free themselves from the old method of work which burdens their minds, until they can rid themselves of all that remains of conservatism.

Under the conditions of the complicated development of the situation in Poland following the 8th Plenum, in the face of the revival of the activity of the enemy and the simultaneous unpreparedness of many of our Party organisations for the struggle against the enemy, above all by political means, with the support of the masses, some Party organisations and some comrades sometimes show a tendency to return to old methods of work.

The violent attack of reactionary forces on devoted and active members of our Party, and on the very principles of the leading role of the Party, caused many Party members to distrust the changes approved by the 8th Plenum. They did not notice that the grounds for this attack were prepared beforehand, in the previous period, and that a political crisis was at that time beginning to develop in Poland, which assumed dangerous proportions and threatened incalculable consequences. And it was precisely the 8th Plenum which gave the Party the chance to come through the crisis and become master of the situation, the chance to restore the bonds between the Party and the people, and at the same time to weaken and then to counter the attack of the forces hostile to socialism. The reactionary forces will not have the chance to influence the masses if our Party organisations and activists consistently overcome dogmatism, sectarian tendencies and conservatism in their work, if they establish ties with the masses and develop political work on a broad scale among the masses.

If a considerable gap has been formed between the prospects opened up for us by the 8th Plenum and the actual influence of many Party organisations; if breaches have often arisen between the resolutions of the 8th Plenum and their actual implementation; if during their implementation errors have arisen, this was mainly due to the fact that many Party activists have not fully understood these resolutions, have not drawn the right conclusions from them for use in their practical work.

This is also the reason why instead of analysing real life, the various forces, moods and tendencies that appear in the community, a simplified formula is sometimes used; no distinction is made between the enemy and he who is, or may be, an ally; everything which is the slightest departure from accepted patterns is thrown into one sack with the inscription "enemy" and in consequence there may be an inclination to settle all conflicts and disagreements, including conflicts and disagreements which are not antagonistic, by means of force instead of by means of convincing people and by political work among the masses.

In the face of the fact that the concerted attack directed by the reactionary forces and various demagogues and trouble makers against our Party activists often did not spare the best and most devoted comrades, a tendency might arise to defend every comrade, regardless of how he works, or even of his moral and political value.

Since in certain dailies, and especially weeklies, there was published a considerable number of false revisionist articles containing unjustified and unjust criticism, the tendency might arise to oppose the entire press and all journalists, a tendency to underestimate the conscious and creative effort of a considerable section of our journalists.

Experience teaches us that a dogmatic and sectarian policy, divorced from reality, can be introduced only by methods of coercion and violence, not only in relation to opponents, but also in relation to allies and even in relation to one's own class.

Sectarianism and dogmatism are a serious obstacle in the correct carrying out of the Party's policy and in conducting an effective struggle against the class enemy, against the bourgeoisie, and its ideological influence among the people.

For he who does not know how to fight his opponents, abandons his position to the bourgeoisie and as a result of ineptitude fails to win allies and even exposes a section of his own class to the influence of the enemy.

The 8th Plenum provided the Party with guiding principles to overcome these weaknesses and inabilities in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and its ideological influences, weaknesses which so greatly affected the Party in the past period. It provided guiding principles for more effective action, for better methods of building socialism with the support of the masses. Active participation in this struggle and in the work of the whole Party is the condition for carrying through these principles.

We have had, and we still have, many cases of distorted and false interpretation of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Party leadership after the 8th Plenum, of exaggerating, negative phenomena, of mistrust and criticism based only on negation, to say nothing of harmful practices in the shape of personal attacks.

This was one of the principal sources of the confusion and passivity of many Party organisations after the 8th Plenum.

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Capitalist Crisis and the Soviet Union

WRITING on the occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Russian revolution, *The Times* stated that "there is no country of any size whose life and policy are left untouched". This is a sentiment with which no Marxist would disagree. Unfortunately, few Marxists have attempted to get beyond the generalisation of the influence of the Soviet Union on other countries, and to examine its effects in detail, particularly in the field of political economy.

It is therefore regrettable that Emile Burns, opening a very useful and most pertinent discussion on "Crisis", attempts to explain the operation of capitalist economies, yet completely ignores the existence of the socialist world, with the exception of a single passing reference to the contrast between the two systems.

One of the features of capitalism today, if not the dominant feature, is that it is forced into competition with socialism, and has to endeavour to demonstrate the superiority of its system against the ever-advancing socialist economies. It naturally tries to hide the truth about socialism and maintains a cold war, but in the long run it recognises that if it falls behind, it is doomed.

As a consequence, capitalism operates within growing political and economic constraints. It is no longer able to cancel during the depression, the gains which such things as greater trade union rights—with growing authority on the question of redundancy, longer periods of contractual employment, social insurance and unemployment benefits. In turn they prevent the working class from becoming rapidly impoverished and demoralised with the advent of unemployment, leading to a general fall in wages.

Of course, none of these rights is sacrosanct, and the financial benefits can hardly be called generous; but the gains are there, and the capitalists no longer have a mechanism by which they can readily reduce wages, unless they wish to embark on a full-scale political battle. Even the most diehard reactionaries hesitate to risk such a fight.

Another aspect, which is likely to cause capitalism greater alarm in the future, is the power of the socialist states to participate in the world market, as trading nations and as suppliers of capital. This means that the control which imperialists have held over the semi-colonial countries is diminishing. These countries no longer have to accept the destruction of their raw materials and the impoverishment of petty producers in times of capitalist crisis, as they now have alternative trade outlets and sources of capital.

In the past, economic crisis was solved by the plunder of the agrarian countries and the pauperisation of the workers at home. By bringing about a depression in prices, especially in the price of labour power, capitalists were given new expectations of profits, and were able to get the wheels turning again.

I think that today, economic crisis cannot be solved in this way. Capitalism is so threatened, that it is compelled to seek alternative solutions. This is not to take the standpoint of Strachey and other Keynesians in the Labour movement, who see capitalism as entering a period of enlightenment, in which it has decided to abolish crisis. Capitalism has the same inherent tendency to crisis, but no longer has the power of self-adjustment.

This is shown in the persistent inflation which has taken place since the war. Because the capitalists have been prevented from cutting wages—in fact the workers have begun to expect wage increases each year—they have attempted to maintain their output by boosting the markets by inflation. This, however, has not brought about an adjustment, and so has given rise to conflict between sections of the capitalist class, and between capitalist countries (in international trade and payments) to such an extent that inflation is under attack.

At the present juncture, there is a fight taking place as to whether the problem will continue to be solved by inflation, by bringing about a wage freeze (and hence a wage cut), or by compelling capitalists to produce for lower profits. Because of the present political situation, any of these solutions is possible.

Certainly, the working class movement can

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compel the capitalists to accept lower and lower levels of profit, though this might lead to a failure of accumulation to take place, which in turn would have to be remedied by an extension of nationalisation.

The question of nationalisation will then become the issue of key importance for the workers in the developing situation. For the inability of capitalism to operate the traditional depression is likely to lead to a long period of stagnation, without a rapid upturn—unless of course there is a war or gigantic technical innovations. The working class will need to seek closer control over basic industry.

Does this mean that the working class is no longer faced with the worst evils of capitalism? The degree of political struggle will determine the answer to this question. In fact, the system is likely to move in a state of continuous crisis, because of the growth of contradictions between the political requirements—higher wages, greater investment, and the economic requirements—lower costs, higher profits etc.

Capitalism will at times be forced to compromise with, and at other times to conduct offensives against, the working class or its allies, including the people in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Since the more the people are won for friendship with the socialist world, the more difficult it is for capitalism to deal with its problems at their expense, the fight for closer relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states is an integral part of the economic struggle of the workers against crisis.

We must see this growing interrelation between economic and political questions. The sharper clash between different sections of the capitalist class, different imperialist powers, and between workers and capitalists will assume more and more the character of a fight around political questions. As capitalism is restrained from adopting its traditional policies, the economic instability will lead to the raising of the question of state power.

The Communist Party and the working class need to understand the laws of motion of capitalist society, and the new and complex forms in which they are manifesting themselves. The advance of the workers lies, not in the experience of another depression, but in the conscious struggle against the crisis being solved at their expense.

JOHN BRIGHT
(*London*)

Some Immediate Problems

I WAS very interested in the article written by Emile Burns in the October issue of *Marxism Today*. Apart from the question of economic crisis being of direct consequence to me as an industrial worker, it is my experience in the last weeks that as a result of the Sputniks 1 and 2, I am now discussing with the workers in the factory where I work not only immediate political questions, but also the fundamental difference between the two systems. This has meant, in addition to current literature, drawing on the material such as *Wages, Prices and Profit* and John Eaton's *Political Economy*, both of which have to be applied as to present conditions.

In the hope of bringing my theory up to date I turned to Emile Burns's article. Having read it I agree that the article follows classical lines, and the content is what we have read in the main over the years. I would have felt that the article was of more value if it had brought Marxist political economy more up to date. For instance, such developments as the European Common Market, which I see as a super monopoly and a development of cosmopolitanism, a last fling of a dying section of monopoly capitalism in Europe to gain strength and a respite, could be explained better by relating it to basic Marxist economics. Then the problem of exploitation should be dealt with in 1957 conditions, because it is difficult for skilled and other workers, using up-to-date equipment, to see how they are being more intensely exploited.

Another point which I feel I would like to know more about, is the main bourgeois economic arguments. John Eaton dismisses them in a page and a half! I think it will then be easier for me to link up the basis of the economic arguments of the Tories and Labour right-wing leaders, who only differ by degree.

Another question on which I would like clarity is this question of employment on armaments. As techniques continue to develop and become more involved, will the tendency be to employ more workers? Also in E. Burns's article, he mentioned that due to the fight for higher wages, consumer demand has been maintained. Is not this a very important issue and could it not be developed more?

JOE RADLEY
(*West Middlesex*)

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Further Discussion

On the Articles of Comrades Kettle and Cornforth

I SHOULD like to make certain comments on the articles by Arnold Kettle and Maurice Cornforth, in *Marxism Today* No. 1, which seem to me to raise vital problems.

My concern with Comrade Kettle's article is not so much with his evaluation of Blake as a great revolutionary poet of his own time, as with his use of Blake to reinforce certain contemporary attitudes and positions which I think have to be re-examined.

Blake, as I see it, was concerned to affirm a human wholeness against the corruption and evil of his day. He had to glorify Energy and the life of the body, and to denounce prudential and "conscientious" considerations, because the "Age of Reason" was in so many ways unreasonable and inhumane; and, like Rousseau (although with an "anti-sentimental" bias which marks him off from Rousseau) he was repelled by even the greatest "mechanical" thinkers of the Enlightenment, and could not see that their work was necessary if his own was ever to be brought to social fruition. Thus far I am with Kettle in appreciating the historical significance and value of Blake's position.

But Blake's "Energy" is an avowedly amoral god. It is true that Blake was appalled by the fate of exploited and ravished innocents (although it seems to me that there is overmuch dramatic relish and *generalised* feeling about a good deal of this) but he could also identify himself with the sort of scoundrel who seemed to him to embody Energy. His reaction against a prostituted Christianity brought him sometimes near to diabolism (a journey which the French "poètes maudits" were to complete). There is his famous judgment that Milton was "of the Devil's Party without knowing it"; and, more explicitly, there is this from his margination to Dante's *Inferno* (I am indebted to *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 1, 1957, for drawing my attention to this reference; the aphorism was first republished in the *T.L.S.* in May, 1957, and now appears in the new bicentenary edition of the *Nonesuch Blake*):

> "The grandest Poetry is Immoral, the grandest characters Wicked, very Satan-Capaneus, Othello a murderer, Prometheus, Jupiter, Jehovah, Jesus a wine-bibber. Cunning and Morality are not Poetry but Philosophy; the Poet is Independent and Wicked: the Philosopher is Dependent and Good."

If we look in the light of this at Blake's impatience with Pity and Mercy, we can see that it can lead all-too-easily to a position "beyond good and evil", such as was taken up by the "Independent and Wicked" poet-philosopher, Nietzsche. This kind of position is a constant temptation for revolutionary writers. Bertolt Brecht, I think, often succumbed to it, as in the *Threepenny Opera* (where, I agree with Herbert Lüthy, the satire on bourgeois society becomes an acceptance of the savagery of the underworld as a norm of human behaviour) and in a play about revolutionary ethics, *Die Massnahme* (which has not been shown in this country, so far as I know, but of which one or two very full accounts have appeared). Even such a great compassionate humanist as Maxim Gorky was clearly tempted by what may be termed "the cult of Energy" (his novel *Foma Gordeyev* seems to me to provide a good instance of this).

To suppose, however, that we can dispense with Pity and Mercy if only we know enough, see clearly enough and act with sufficient energy and determination is really "to throw out the baby with the bath-water". It is, I should say, an important psychological factor in the process whereby devoted Communists could be led to justify and even to participate in the police excesses that have disfigured the building of socialism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. It could be termed a form of Utopianism.

Comrade Kettle invokes La Fayette and in our own day Koestler and Orwell as examples of intellectuals who are seduced by "humanitarianism" considerations into outright betrayal of necessary social revolution. He equates their attitude with Blake's image of "pitying the stormy roar". But if that "stormy roar" is a roar of intolerable human anguish — what then? Maxim Gorky and Romain Rolland were and remained revolutionary writers. But they pitied

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and pleaded for prisoners of the revolution as well as of the counter-revolution.

To sum up: we must not use the "Poetry" of Blake to justify the "Cunning and Morality" of any "Philosophy", even of a philosophy which can be shown to be derived in part from Blakean insights.

This brings me to Maurice Cornforth's article on *Philosophy, Criticism and Progress.*

Here I find myself in sympathy with an important part of Comrade Cornforth's aim, which is to encourage a less dogmatic, a less "metaphysical" approach by Marxists to philosophical questions. Again, I am with him in thinking that philosophy can contribute to the solution of such urgent problems as "that both parties and states are means and not ends, what are the ends for which they are required, and how they can be made to serve these ends".

I do not see, however, that a philosophy which avoids measuring progress in terms of "happiness" or "well-being" because these states are considered to belong to the realm of "opinion or preference" rather than "ascertainable fact"—I do not see that such a philosophy can throw much fresh light on the nature of progress.

Marx's philosophic vision was of the universe, including Man and the mind of Man, as a complex of processes all governed by the laws of dialectical change. This vision has in turn fired the imagination of poets and men of science as well as class-conscious workers and left-wing politicians. Haldane wrote in his introduction to *The Dialectics of Nature* that much unnecessary puzzlement and frustration would have been spared the physicists in particular had they been acquainted with the materialist dialectic. (In the latest issue of *Marxism Today* Professor Bernal shows the influence of Marxist ideas on the study of the origins of life.) Among poets and scholars whose own outlook has been transformed by Marx's picture of harmony and unity in Man himself and in his society being capable of achievement only through the correct handling and resolution of conflict, we may instance Christopher Caudwell, Jack Lindsay and Professor George Thomson. Jack Lindsay, as is well known, has been influenced in particular by Marx's tragic view of Man's inevitable alienation from his own products and from his own human nature under the conditions of class society.

The point I want to make here is that all this is the kind of philosophic thinking which has close affinities with poetic thinking and with the most creative kind of scientific thinking. It is generalised thinking on the basis of science and on the basis of all human experience, including aesthetic experience, *deeply felt* as well as worked over intellectually by the philosopher. It seems to me that without this spirit, which is a passionate *synthesising* spirit, philosophy conceived as "critical enquiry" can easily degenerate into logic-chopping.

There is at present a growing reaction, especially amongst young thinkers, against the cold, valueless universe of the logical analysts. This can take a potentially dangerous mystical form, as with Colin Wilson. But there is behind it a burning desire to restore the *whole man* to philosophy. Nobody has criticised logical positivism from a classical Marxist position more effectively than Comrade Cornforth himself. But another sort of criticism is also needed—the moral blasts of Miss Anscombe in the *Listener,* who refused to judge the A-bombing of Hiroshima only with reference to its hypothetical indirect consequences (in the supposed saving of Allied lives).

I believe that it is the felt need for a poetic, prophetic vision which leads Comrade Kettle to recommend Blake so enthusiastically to us. And I believe that Comrade Cornforth shares the deep distrust of old-fashioned rationalists and new-fashioned logical analysts for such a vision (this was shown in his treatment of Caudwell more clearly and fully than in the present article). My own view is that to take ready-made such a vision as Blake's, and try to fit it on to "Marxism" is no way to be either a poet or a philosopher. We must each have our *own* vision, worked out for and by ourselves. We must not be uncritical of it (here Cornforth's warnings are salutary) and we must not avoid or shout down the criticisms of others. But it is necessary for every man, to the best of his ability, to be his own poet and his own prophet. It was out of such a welter of passionate thought and feeling in the English Revolution that the great constructive, intellectual achievements of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came forth. The other great pre-requisite was the growing realisation of the need for *tolerance.* Comrade Cornforth's recommendation of the give-and-take of controversy shows that he is alive to this side of our present-day needs. But there will be no fruitful clash of views, no sparks will be struck off, unless a good number of the controversialists are no longer (to use Bevan's provocative phrase) "dessicated calculating machines" but are thinking and speaking and writing from the depths of their being.

OSMOND ROBB (*Edinburgh*)

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